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THEN I SAW THE CONGO

Grace Flandrau

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Then I Saw the Congo

BY GRACE FLANDRAU

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TO

ALICE O'BRIEN

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THEN I SAW THE CONGO

Chapter 1

TO BEGIN WITH

"Then I saw the Congo creeping through the black,
Cutting through the forest with a golden track,
Then along that river bank
A thousand miles
Tattooed cannibals danced in files;
Then I heard the boom of the blood-lust song
And a thigh-bone beating on a tin-pan gong."

TRAVEL, some one has said, is not from place to place but from person to person, and looking back upon my own rather unnecessarily numerous journeys, it seems to me that this is true. I believe it is almost always the desire to see not so much new objects as new people that takes travelers—all but the dullest travelers—on their various pilgrimages. Certainly it was that desire which was taking us to Central Africa.

We wanted to see—and to photograph—primitive people. The whole challenge of what has so invitingly been called the heart of darkness lay for us in the fact that while the rest of the world has been changing its clothes, ideas, and religions so continuously and so radically for the past few thousands of years, there were, or so we believed, certain peoples who went their prehistoric ways unchanged. In the equatorial forests of

Africa the tomtoms beat, the ivory horns sounded, and Mumbo-Jumbo and all the other Gods of the Congo were, it seemed, worshiped more or less undisturbed, and we wanted to go there and see and, as I have said, to photograph it being done.

Particularly we wanted to visit a native race living in the Congo forests known as the Mangbetus, a fascinating people which has remained curiously unknown to the English-speaking world.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica is such delightful reading that doubtless one should not expect too much of it in the realm of mere fact. Not long ago, in consulting volume Cha to Con, I learned to my surprise that these Mangbetus among whom we spent many delightful weeks in the Ituri forest are totally extinct. In volume Lor to Mec of the same edition it is stated that there are about a million Mangbetus still extant—a people of the highest indigenous culture and famous as the (one time) leading cannibals of the country. It added somewhat vaguely that all were not, however, hundred per cent. Mangbetus. Nor did the great and good book offer any suggestion as to who this people had been before and if they joined the ichthyosaurus and five-toed horse in the select band of prehistoric has-beens.

Perhaps, however, it should not be too greatly blamed for this. Africa's past keeps its secrets well. As to whether the Mangbetus came from north, south, east, or west when they arrived to conquer the local inhabitants, no two authorities agree or even venture an opinion as to the period at which it happened. Nor does it, to me at least, in any way matter. Mysterious enough they are in any case, living such lyric and inexplicable lives in their painted villages in the Ituri. Certainly our sojourn among them will throw no new light on

ethnological or any other problems concerning them—our expedition, let me hasten to warn the reader, being inspired not by science, but by curiosity.

Moreover, the vast equatorial belt of Central Africa, which we traveled from west to east, entering the continent at the mouth of the Congo and emerging, over half a year later, at Mombasa on the Indian Ocean, has far more to offer than just the antique and fantastic spectacle of the Mangbetus. Indeed this spectacle was, at times, all but lost sight of among the many attractions of the great three-ring show now being staged along the world's last great frontier. When you look at the clowns you miss the acrobats; when you watch the seals balancing bright balloons on their beautiful sleek noses, you fail to see the elephants sitting on red stools and playing drums. Circuses—and books—are short, and Africa, like Art, is very long.

Africa, the somber, the tragic, the humorous, the incalculable continent—a preglacial mastodon among nations, being laboriously whipped into shape to keep step with a post-war modernity, with an economic-minded, machine-minded, air-minded new world! The most romanced about, not to say lied about, of all those far places people visit in search of the peace that lives beyond steel sky lines. I shall not succeed in showing even what we saw of it as it so amazingly is. But perhaps a small part of the truth will click itself out of a typewriter somewhat the worse for its long journey day after day through the tall forest on the round, unwilling head of a black boy with a tattooed nose.

Chapter 2

SLAVE COAST PORTS

BEFORE reaching our first African port, Dakar, in Senegal, the passengers on board the *Brazza* imparted a great deal of information to each other: Dakar is full of yellow fever; nobody will be allowed to land. There is no yellow fever; everybody will be allowed to land. The captain has had a wireless that twenty people just died. The captain has had a wireless that nobody ever died.

It was a curious sensation to wake up and find the ship motionless and to miss the throb of the engines and the hiss of the water alongside. The absence of these sounds made a silence back of all the other noises, of the shouting, the grinding of cranes, the tumbling about of cargo. Through the porthole came a different air; the breeze still had some of the freshness of morning, but there was a burning quality, a liquid blaze of heat—new, golden, ominous.

Up and down the decks and passageways natives hurried, natives in red fezzes and floating Mahomedan robes, native officials in pith helmets and white uniforms, native roustabouts in torn felt hats and the rags of white men's clothing—a tattered Norfolk jacket and a loin cloth, or a calico skirt and woolen cap. And how fine were the six opulent negresses in the Mahomedan taste who came aboard with their joint husband, a dark, oldish gentleman in a linen duster with a sun

BUSH NATIVES

PRISONERS WAITED IN THE SUN

(*See page* 31)

helmet over his fez. Veils and floating muslins, Arab slippers of purple and gold, not worn but carried in their hands, chains of gold coins about their necks, toes and fingers jeweled and the nails painted blood-red—indolently swaying, smiling women, tranquil, in the very center of their world!

In the dining-room *messieurs les passagers* had added helmets to their usual breakfast costume of pyjamas, bare feet, and wicker sandals and were eating the awful things that kind of French people eat for breakfast—raw ham, meat soup with bread, wine, and cheese.

Launches rushed back and forth alongside; naked blacks indolently shifted freight or dove for pennies or lay about the decks of flatboats, given up to some strange perfection of idleness. Here and there a native dugout canoe, black as a shadow, slender as a dragon fly, took its way over the indolently swinging water, guided by a naked paddler. All of one piece they seemed, the man, the long pole of the trident-shaped paddle, the dugout with its needle-pointed ends—a black silhouette cut out of the brilliant day. Sometimes in the bottom of the dark canoe, built like a folded leaf, lay a heap of green oranges, as dazzlingly green as winter wheat in Minnesota.

At lunch I could not sit still but must get up to look out of the porthole at the black men stretched on the barges counting their coins, tying them up in a corner of their loin cloths, taking off their white men's rags to become suddenly beautiful and to lie in fine, loose-limbed poses, naked in their hot sunshine and the cool breezes that ruffled the waters of the shallow harbor.

A colonial official pointed to a small island and the ruins of an old fort: "France's first foothold in West Africa. It took us thirty years to win the Senegal. It wasn't easy. They were

great fighters, these people, and then there was the fever and the lack of proper food. It wasn't easy."

Thirty years of war, of how much unknown heroism and sacrifice! "What does France get from Dakar?"

"Mostly peanuts."

Peanuts! I thought of the thirty years of war. . . . "That doesn't seem very much."

"Peanuts, Madame, are very important."

Then he searched the sky for an airplane, remarking that there was a weekly passenger service from France to Dakar!

For three weeks we sailed south, then east under the great bulge of the continent, then south again. The ocean slept, breathing deeply, and the sun, blurred with humidity, made a path like moonshine on the oily swell. Sea turtles rocked on the waves and little fish like trout swam upward to the surface and flew and flew before the ship. Far away in the east, between the slowly swinging sea and heat-misted sky, was the dark, still outline of Africa. Below Dakar the blowy desert vegetation gave place to the great forest which lay, unbroken and unending, upon the land; and palm oil, rubber, mahogany, and other products even more important to empire than peanuts, began.

The *Brazza* dropped anchor almost every day off a port of call and the colonials came out in droves to inspect the wonders of the new ship and to drink—for the first time in how long!—iced drinks at the bar. Pale Frenchmen in white drill or khaki uniforms; pale French women with their eternal effort at elegance—lace veils draped over pith helmets, darkened eyelashes, perfumes and powders that left a trail of scent along the decks, lips touched with a vivid scarlet that assorted oddly with the surprising display of gold teeth.

This was the famous old, wicked old West African slave coast, and the very names, Gold Coast, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Dahomey, were rich with that peculiar glamour that attends an exceedingly evil reputation. History is sad reading—at least I find it so, although many, I believe, follow it unmoved or even with a certain exaltation at the forward march of the species. But I can never discount the cost, or refrain from getting angry at the heights of hypocritical ferocity to which our human kind so frequently rises. Even on days as indolent as those, when the *Brazza* lay peacefully at anchor in the shallow estuary of some sluggish river, one could not escape thoughts of the five hundred years of Christian activities along these shores—the exploiting, kidnaping, converting, that so merrily went on. Here the tall-masted slavers rocked at anchor, waiting, while everywhere, along all the inland trails, blazed, we read, by piles of human bones, down these rivers of anguish to the sea came the captives in thousands, in millions, led by the first Christian music heard here—the singing of whips, rattle of chains, weeping of mothers. All done in the names of their various Most Christian Majesties of Europe and later of our own most Christian republic.

To be sure, all about us were the descendants of those individuals who had *not* been forcibly carried off in the interests of Christian imperialism, and none of them seemed to be engaged in forwarding any of the various causes of progress. There they were, naked in their needle-pointed canoes or lying about their swinging barges, absurdly gay, insanely indolent. After you had seen them laugh, heard them sing, watched them move, you felt that you had never before seen laughter, heard music, or witnessed physical grace. But who is to estimate the value of such trifles? Whereas, had their great-great-grandparents been battened into the mortal hold of a

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slaver, these same gentlemen might now be making up lower berths, playing the saxophone in night clubs, doing a buck and wing on Broadway, or furnishing models to the black-faced comedians. So possibly it's all for the best. . . . (And—as an afterthought—there are the poets we have occasionally permitted them.)

We had on board the *Brazza* many of the present-day emissaries of progress to Africa, soldiers, business men, missionaries —about the only travelers, as yet, to the West coast. Sensibly they were not concerned with philosophic divertissements. Their talk was chiefly of malaria and sunstroke. If you exposed your bare head to the wicked ultraviolet rays of the sun (which in the U. S. A. are enjoying such an expensive vogue) you perished. As to the treatment of malaria, opinion was divided. Not as to the necessity for taking quinine all the time, but as to whether five grains a day or thirty each week end were the proper dose. There were hunting stories too, and tales of adventure of various kinds, immensely interesting, I thought, to listen to. But the colonials themselves never, it seemed, under any circumstances believed each other's stories, the listeners all sitting with glazed eyes and a look of polite disdain, waiting to tell their own.

These old colonials differed from the other French in one important or possibly unimportant particular—they drank not like French, but like Americans, thoroughly and often. All day the bar was crowded, and the wine card bore a small list of so-called American drinks—beverages referred to as Gobblers, Eggs-Naggs, and of course cocktails. Each morning *messieurs les passagers* were respectfully prayed, by means of a printed sign, to try the "cocktail of the day," of which the favorite with the colonials was the "Cocktail Sauvage," an

appetizer composed, among other things, of condensed milk, curaçao, angostura bitters, orange-flower water, and gin.

We were anchored off Tabou on the Ivory Coast. My typewriter was on a table, and four little dark-skinned children stared at the keys. They all looked exactly alike and were all cross-eyed. When I first saw them I thought my eyesight was betraying me, but they were all real and all the children of a Pasteur Institute doctor on board. A special interest invested this man because he had had the terrible African sleeping-sickness and got over it.

Tabou is one of the most famous of the ancient slave ports. There is a difficult bar here, and paddlers, ten or twelve to a canoe, labor with all their might to bring the long dugouts through the surf. One or two white officials came aboard, but no one else. Gray with humidity, the burning sunshine lay like a deadly weight upon the land. The white-crested waves creamed along the yellow beach and beat and beat against the low rock promontory where the lighthouse is. There were one or two European buildings, some thatched native huts, low, taking the contour of the rocks, or round with tall, peaked roofs. Through the glasses we could see a few white men and women standing on shore, looking toward the *Brazza*. Natives moved slowly under a spell of dreamlike idleness. There were no streets, only a path of red earth leading up a hill, and a sense of perfect remoteness, of languor, which seemed to reach out even to us, insidious and compelling—

> "Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
> And in a little while our lips are dumb.
> Let us alone. What is it that will last? . . .
> Let us alone."

Evening came. In the bar a young man from shore with honest, haunted eyes sat alone at a table drinking one champagne cocktail after another. I did not, somehow, like to look at him, and went out on deck. A long native canoe was putting off for shore. Graceful and effortless, the naked paddlers sat in rows along the gunwales, swinging their slender paddles. Two little drums beat in the stern, and a slender boy sat on the prow playing a small hand harp, his body jerking in counter tempo to the rhythm. The sea gleamed like a pearl, but shadows of night had crept over the wide, dark land and the still forest. A feeling of what seemed to me the monotony of savagery came over me and made me sad. But savage and savagery are words you do not use after you have spent some time in Central Africa.

We stood by the railing throwing cigarettes down to a group of naked stevedores who should have been rustling freight but who were dancing, screaming, fighting over the cigarettes, in that state of engaging frenzy to which their kind seems to be so easily roused. A mild voice addressed me, and turning, I found the long yellow pear-shaped face of a young Dutch missionary close to mine. He was smiling with a kind of benevolent, forgiving rapture and pointed to a barge load of blacks alongside: "To think that a commercial gentleman on board referred to these fellow men of ours as a 'mass of infected mud'! Ah, he is wrong! But there is much to be done. The field is large. Have you seen our midwives?"

"Your what?"

"Midwives. Did you not see a group of young negro ladies in pith helmets who came aboard at Dakar?"

I did remember seeing half a dozen giggling girls in European dress—a costume which, in contrast to the native naked-

ness we had seen, had suddenly become preposterous—and had wondered who they could be. And I thought if their parents had known they were going to grow up to be widwives in pith helmets, surely they would not have filed their daughters' teeth to needle points, or slashed their faces in such handsome patterns and dyed the scars green!

This Dutch evangelist, as well as most of the Americans on board, had been trained at the Methodist school in Paris which prepares missionaries for service in those African colonies where French is the official language. I had often noticed him —the too easy exaltation in his mild, shiny eyes, the loose, wide, too red mouth, the boneless, slender hands; and had pondered upon the possibilities for indirect and complicated sinning, for unctuous and complicated remorse.

In pleasing contrast was the young apostle of a so-called Faith sect, who occasionally came up from the second class to chat in the—to us—unknown and astonishing language of Fundamentalism—a language, however, which we were to hear more than once in remote mission clearings in the Congo forests. This Faith sect, he told us, paid no regular salaries. They sent money to their missionaries when they had it, and when they didn't, the latter just had to rely on faith. This he seemed to think was a very satisfactory arrangement: "If you were sure of getting money to live on, what chance," he demanded, "would you have for Faith?"

It was a dark night off the Canary Islands, I remember, when he first spoke to us. West of us a gold city rose out of the sea, and we had it in sight a long time as the ship stole softly through the black water. "God," said Mr. S., "promised to look after all those who call on Him, see? And He's sure to come across. All you gotta do is to say to Him, Lord, I done what I could, now it's up to you."

But he had come away this time with no money at all and a second-hand Ford truck which was to take him to his inland mission. And I think, although his faith never faltered, he was sometimes a little worried as to how he was going to buy gasoline and tires and supplies for the journey—or would have been except that on the night of his departure he had happened, he said, to turn on a radio and had heard these words come out of the air: "Be not afraid, I will be with thee always." He had prayed for a sign, and that was the answer.

He liked Africa, he assured us, much better than Iowa, where he came from. He was fond of shooting and there was plenty of antelope and other game around his station. His great desire, however, was to own a gun big enough for lion and elephant. On moonlight nights the natives came to the mission from miles and miles around, carrying lighted torches to keep off the leopards. They sat out in front on their little ebony stools, hundreds of them, and how they sang! Their voices were beautiful and loud and they kept time with their bodies, their feet, hands, everything. Sometimes they got almost too excited. But that was all right, he said, because the words were religious. He translated hymns and set them to any tune that happened to be catchy enough. He closed his eyes now and sang one of the hymns for us. I don't know how to spell the words, but they sounded like this:

"B'Jonie teting Mama,
B'Jonie teting Papa,
B'Jonie teting Ita
B'Jonie teting M'Bie."

He could sing it, he stated, in four native languages.

The gold city in the Canaries was slipping behind, a mist of light on the black horizon. There was only the coughing breath

of our quiet oil-burning engines and the voice of the little Faith missionary singing Bangala words that sounded like particularly foolish baby talk, to the tune of "John Brown's Body." And back of that thin tenor, all through those moonlight nights on the Ubangui, what towering fountain of song rises higher and higher as the black bodies sway, the hands beat, the rhythm pulses quicker, sharper, more passionate, till the whole world throbs under the white African moon?—while away off the leopards raise their yellow heads from the torn stomach of a gazelle to listen . . .

But if the faith of the Faith missionaries did not falter before the absence of money to buy gasoline and tires, it was sorely tried by something else. This something else was a person, a personage in fact, a suave and worldly-wise, a cultivated, friendly, indomitable gentleman with vivid blue Breton eyes and a kind of shrewd French nose that seemed to flow along the wind—one of our fellow passengers, a Catholic missionary priest, famous throughout the French Congo for twenty-seven years—the Archbishop, no less, of Bangui. And now the Archbishop was going to establish a mission near the post of the Faith people. If they could have worried about anything they would have worried about this prospective rivalry. The priest would have the officials on his side, they would not; he had in the hold a brand new Citroën touring-car and a brand new truck that ran by charcoal; he spoke seven native languages perfectly and had written books in them. They had only a second-hand Ford and spoke only one native language—and that badly.

At Douala in the Camerun where they all went ashore the Archbishop was seen boarding the tender in his long priest's robe and shovel hat, carrying two brand new Mausers, for elephant-hunting (of which he was very fond), slung over one

shoulder. A moment later he rushed back on the *Brazza,* disappeared into his cabin, reappeared with two brand new automobile tires slung over the other shoulder. The Faith missionaries had no Mausers and no spares, but we had given them a little money for immediate necessities, and they saw in that the direct intervention of Divine Goodness on their behalf—although we assured them that our insignificant gesture was entirely impelled by an interest in motor travel in remote places. "We are not interested in Faith missions," we assured Mr. S.; "we don't believe in them."

"That's what you think, but it's not so," he placidly replied. "It was God speaking to you. He done it. Didn't I say he would?"

It was only at Douala that anything as pretentious as a tender came out to take the passengers ashore. At most of the ports they were removed from the ship in aërial baskets. Four to a basket they were hoisted from the deck of the *Brazza* and dangled in mid-air at the end of steel cables while a ruddy-cheeked deck steward from Normandy slapped the faces of the scared blacks who operated the donkey engine. After much inexpert handling of engine and crane the basket was lowered and dropped with a bump into its place on the waiting flatboat —the iron hook by which cable and basket were united usually falling off and hitting some one on the head. The unfortunate travelers waited on the barge in the broiling sun while basket after basket was lowered and wedged into place. Slowly and fatefully the flatboat rocked up and down till everybody had become violently ill. At last a tug appeared, ran full tilt into the barge, backed away, tried again, laid hold of her with ropes, and towed her ashore, where the baskets were hauled up to the high dock by means of another crane.

A friend of ours once remarked that he always traveled on French boats because in case of accident, there would be no damned nonsense about women and children first—an unworthy wise crack, of course, but belonging to a whole tradition of doubt as to Latin seamanship. Whenever the *Brazza* left one of these shallow harbors where freight-ships in considerable numbers were often anchored, she always chose to move through the very thickest part of the shipping. And we discovered that this maneuver, which brought our hearts into our mouths, was supposed by the French to demonstrate the marvelous seamanship of the Captain. He might so easily have bumped into something and just didn't! And one little scene, demonstrating the informality of these precarious exits, remained amusingly stamped on my memory.

Blowing our horn and shaving the very eyebrows off the other vessels, we cautiously slid forward when a canoe was seen bounding toward us as fast as the paddlers could drive it. Four fat white men in spotless duck and sun helmets sat wedged into a basket, frantically saluting the ship: "Wait, wait for us. We didn't know. Nobody told us the hour."

Their plea was heard. The engines reversed, the first mate rushed out onto a spar to shout at the four fat men. The fat men shouted back. Chains ground, the ship slowed down, stopped, ropes were run out. Again the voices of the fat men:

"They didn't tell us. We didn't know the *Marco* sailed at two."

"The *Marco?* But name of a pipe, this isn't the *Marco.*"

"Not the *Marco?* What is it?"

"It's the *Brazza*"—name of something stronger than a pipe.

"But it's the *Marco* we want."

"Well"—the this and the that, and the that and the this—"go and find it."

Round swings the pirogue, faster than ever flash the paddles, more violently than before the fat men wave their arms and shout at a passenger vessel anchored some little distance off. The first mate retired from the spar, and with rattlings and rumblings, the 15,000-ton *Brazza,* which had been flagged and stopped as if she were a trolley, swung round, missing by a hair a timber ship that loomed up beside us, and resumed her progress toward the sea.

At every port we found these lumber vessels wallowing in the shallow swell, taking on mahogany. And among our passengers was an African timber cruiser and owner, a kind of tropical Paul Bunyan, a veritable Viking of a man. Tramping the lethal West Coast forests for seventeen years had merely reddened his red cheeks, made more violent the fire of his blue eyes, more golden the great beard that rayed out from his cheeks, smothered his jaw, clouded his broad chest, every gold hair crackling with super-vitality. Fever, dysentery, sleeping-sickness carried off his companions; but he had a stomach, he proclaimed loudly, "to digest microbes." He laughed at danger and disease but complained bitterly of the crickets—their singing, he said, kept him awake nights.

At Libreville in the French Gabon the yellow flag at last disappeared from our masthead, and for the first time we were permitted to set foot in Africa. How quiet it was in Libreville, how noiseless the footsteps of the blacks! One red road wound up the hill and disappeared in green, green foliage through which red roofs showed. The other lay along the sea front with a spreading shade tree one ecstatic mass of scarlet flowers growing irrelevantly in the middle. Natives, naked or dressed in some rag of white man's clothing, passed, supple, slow-moving, walking with a careless, upright grace—girls with pots and bundles, enamel basins, a folded parasol, a

banana, what not, poised on their heads. Against the lovely silence were only the whisper of the palms leaning toward the sea, the lap-lap of the waves on the yellow sand, the hiss of the turning tide.

There were shops and warehouses of white traders, unkempt places of stained white cement, moldering bricks, and rusted tin roofs, and near them scattered along the sea front were refuse heaps of old tin cans and rotting barbed wire. We climbed the rickety staircase of one of these trading-posts. Inside a long, cool gallery with a counter stretching the whole length was a wilderness of pots, kettles, canned and bottled food and drink, blankets, calicoes, sun helmets, shoes—the usual stock of a frontier emporium. The shop was run by a couple worth looking at because you see them behind counters along all the fringes of civilization in the world. He is swarthy, sallow, undersized, fat. Portuguese? Greek? Armenian? Levantine Jew? Half-caste? Who knows? She small, with a parchment skin, black eyes, sharp, hard, unflinching, the eyes of a serpent, of a bird, or of one of those witch women we sometimes see in dreams. The age of these two can be determined no more easily than their race. They have never been younger, will never be older. Neither climate nor disease affects them. They are like the conserves in the tins that crowd their shelves —mummified in the milkless vacuum of petty trade. He did not lift down the parasol or move the bolt of cloth I wished to see, but merely pointed out these objects with a dirty forefinger to a handsome black man who served him as though he were a king.

Beyond was a native market and then a café restaurant open to the sea, where one or two pale white men languidly drank mild, un-iced drinks at tables covered with red cloths, barefooted natives lounging behind the bar.

Back to the *Brazza,* remembering the processional movement of the natives passing up and down the red sea road, the yellow sands, the silence. Forgetting the moldering cement and rusty iron, the haggard white men sweating out their quinine. These did not, after all, belong to the lyric scene, and yet they did—symbol as they are of advancing empire.

"There's going to be hell on board this ship tonight. Our people are all coming off. A hundred cases of champagne will be drunk up, fifty blinking women'll be here. This is the toughest place in Africa, this is a hell of a place. This is Porte Gentille, where I get off."

This was a young clerk of a British company, always referred to by the French as l'Anglais and much admired by them. When not doing handsprings on deck, Charleston steps, shadow boxing, changing from one sports costume to another, he conversed. He told us how to kick a nigger in the stomach and that the West Coast was the place "because the French didn't treat our chaps like clerks but like gentlemen."

Tonight the English boy was a little drunk. It was late. The ship lay motionless on a sea of black glass. Our searchlights picked up phantoms drifting toward us—white uniformed figures standing erect, it seemed, on the sea, the hulks of the little craft lost in the perfect blackness of the water. The native boats you could not see at all, only knew where they were from the soft tinkling of hand harps and throbbing of small drums. There was the usual constant shouting from the barges, and soft but clear, there was the clink of chains. Black men, with chains around their necks fastening them together in couples, came out of invisible holds into the lilac-white glare of our lights. We were taking prisoners aboard.

But first had come the fashion and deviltry, the hard

drinkers and blinking women, of this hell-hole of the Atlantic. Modest, rather shy colonials, the most provincial and simple-looking people we had seen. They walked quietly about the ship, trying not to look impressed by its splendors, and then gathered in rather speechless groups about the tables in the bar, splitting a few bottles of beer.

The bosses of the English boy had also come aboard. They sat around a table staring at him. No one was talking at that table but the English boy. Suddenly without a remark of any kind these gentlemen who had come out to meet their new clerk rose, and turning their backs on him, strolled away. As they passed our table we heard a fragment of sentence—"possibly learn a thing or two out here."

"No," was the reply. "I give him six weeks at the outside."

What was this Africa, I asked myself, that could prove a man in six weeks? Flimsy-souled though he was, six weeks is not a very long time! But soon now we would know. One more port in French Africa, Pointe Noire, a small Portuguese possession passed in the night, and then, the following morning, the very sea itself seemed to turn eastward into the continent and we were in the vast estuary of the Congo.

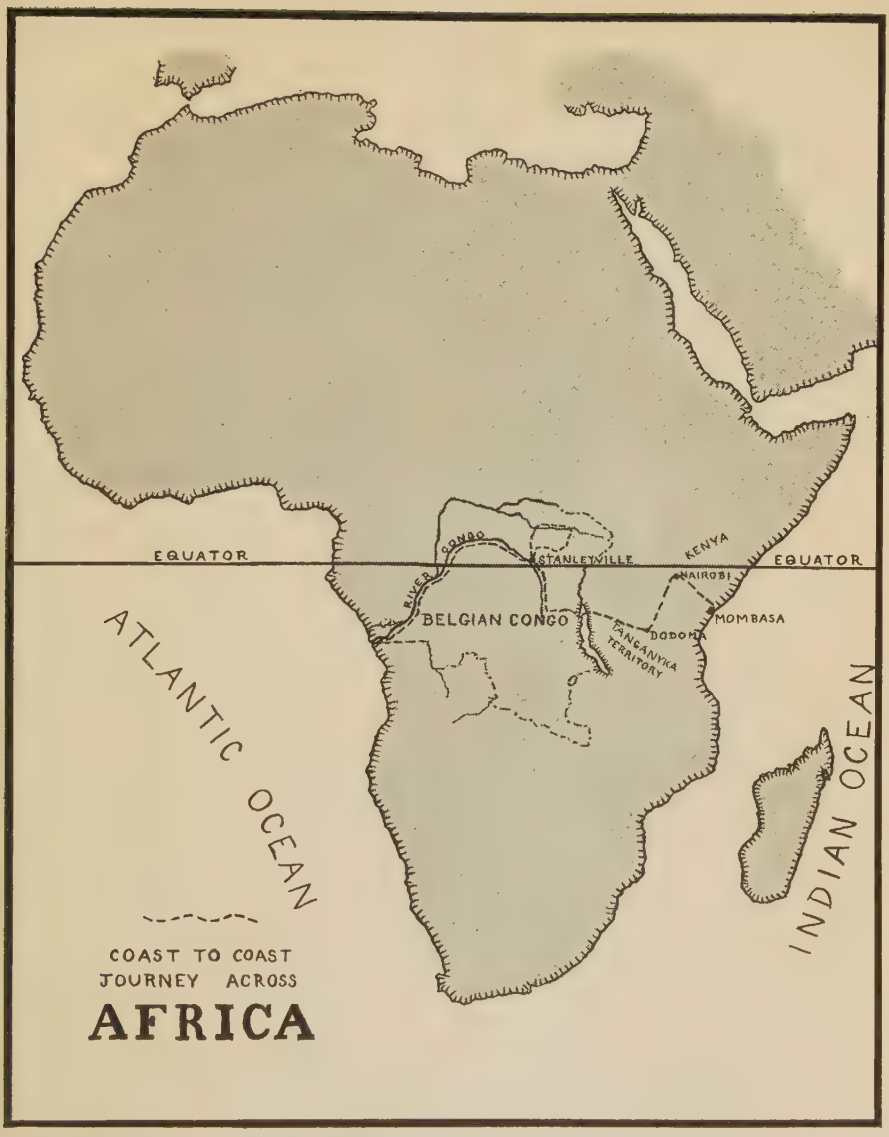
Chapter 3

THE GREAT RIVER

WHEN we turned our backs on the ocean it was as if the windows of a steam laundry had suddenly been closed. I felt unexpectedly afraid. I felt afraid of the heat. How hot could and did it get on the equator along whose imaginary line we were going to cross Africa? Until that time no matter how persistently the vertical sunlight streamed down upon us there was always the cool breath of the Atlantic to mitigate the heat and make it agreeable. But now that life-giving breath was cut off and a sudden menace seemed to have come into being.

The Congo was as wide as the sea. It was so wide that it reduced the whole world to flatness, made the tall jungle just a gray-green carpet bordering a vast floor of glassy water. The river itself was bleached of all color by the heat and seemed compressed by the weight of the air to an element heavier and oilier than water. Islands were scattered over this shining floor and the screen of Botanical Garden foliage rose sheer from islands and mainland without beach or shore line. Away off bare hills outlined the extreme limits of the immense valley. The sky too was pale and hung with steam-white clouds.

It was an almost empty river. Red buoys marked the channel, chalk-white painted navigation signs appeared strangely alongshore in the midst of the savage vegetation. We passed a



WE ENTERED AT THE MOUTH OF THE CONGO AND LEFT HALF A YEAR LATER FROM MOMBASA ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

FRIENDS WE ACQUIRED ON THE WEST COAST

(*See page* 91)

dark-sailed native boat, a small freighter whistled at us, that was all. The shore too seemed empty of all life except that of the forest with whose violent monotony we were to become familiar through so many unexpected months. At long intervals the curtain of jungle was torn and a small clearing of leaf-roofed native huts appeared, or the tin house of a white trader in palm nuts.

The *Brazza* slipped fast and silently upstream against the strong current, and in all this silence and teeming desolation there was only the whisper of her powerful engines. With field glasses glued to our eyes we raked the shores, but not a single rotting log turned out to be a crocodile meditating under the veiled sun. It was, old residents were on hand to tell us, just the wrong time of year for crocodiles. As it was the rainy season south of the equator and the dry season north of it, the river was high and the crocs were covered up. At almost any other moment they would be as numerous as the "Portuguese concessions"—little detached gardens of green torn from overhanging banks, which rushed past us on their way to the sea.

Toward noon the shadowy blue hills on the north—hills as bare, except for the fringes of palms along their base, as our Montana hills—came closer to the river, and when the sun was standing squarely above us, devouring every vestige of shade, the *Brazza* came to rest in the small harbor of Boma.

How green was the green hiding the steeply climbing little town, how blood-red the flame trees, how tropical, how exotic the setting for the first four letters my eyes rested on in the Congo—FORD! Overhead not one but two airplanes passed with remote thunder, a Johnson outboard motor swiftly propelled a launch bringing out officials in incredibly white duck and helmets, and near by a naked black man fished from his

dugout canoe. The canoe bore marks of fire and adze by which the tree trunk had been hollowed out and was decorated with those warm, imperfect designs, those blunt, naïf figures which moderns hope to recreate by taking a long intellectual somersault back to the mood of their beginnings. He had a piece of bone—the tibia, I was told by a purist, of one of the smaller monkeys—thrust through his nose, and his chest and face and shoulders were a maze of beautifully cut designs.

Printed in gigantic white letters along the side of the dock was a text which did not seem to us altogether well chosen—"MOSQUITOES ARE OUR WORST ENEMY." Far too much talk had already gone on about Congo malaria to leave us entirely carefree, and this official reminder rather rubbed it in. And across the river from Boma the ruins of an old fort reminded you that Leopold had to fight to get his rich African empire and establish a new and more civilized servitude for the Bakongos, Azandes, Mangbetus, Pygmies and all the other black families and races of the Congo and bring them (more or less) into step with the age of gasoline engines and wings.

There was only an hour to spend at Boma, as the *Brazza* must reach Matadi, one hundred miles above the mouth of the river, before dark. The ships anchored at or off Boma saluted the *Brazza,* and the *Brazza* boomed in reply the boom of the biggest and newest boat on the whole coast. Then the bouquet of green fastened to the hard breast of the hills that was Boma slipped downstream, and the blazing headland where a row of desolate huts side by side, close to each other and to the stark, red earth—the prison—lay deathlike under the incalculable sun.

"Do you find it hot here, really?" asked a young Englishman who had come aboard at Boma. "I hope not, because you're sure to find it much hotter where you're going. We've

got a rather good climate at Boma. Of course there are heaps of mosquitoes and lots of malaria—my predecessor died of blackwater just before I came out. But you'll find it much worse up there. And I advise you to be jolly careful at Kin. They're having a typhoid epidemic there. First time in Central Africa—typhoid is not an African disease, you know."

We expressed relief to know there was one that wasn't.

"Oh, Africa's not half bad. But I say, I hope you're not going to write a book. People write such awful rot. I've got a friend in Boma who collects books people write on Africa and reads them whenever he wants a good laugh. A chap wants cheering up out here, you know. Women's books are the worst. There was a Lady A. who went up where you're going. She wrote one; it's in my friend's collection. Her friend Mrs. B. got herself killed by a rhino. I hope you're not going to shoot rhinos. People are always getting themselves killed and it's no end of trouble for everybody." Then this optimistic young man invited us to a football game in Matadi next day and drifted away.

Our approach to Matadi was made extremely hectic by the fact that our French friends, Dr. and Mme. C., were under the impression that all Americans must have raw gin at tea time, by the increasing picturesqueness of the scenery, including the presence of whirlpools, by certain cases of canned milk that had to be procured for the C. baby, and by the fact that packing could not be completed because nobody could tell us whether we would leave the ship that night or the next morning.

Four o'clock was the hour at which we had been invited by the C.'s to join them for a farewell *apéritif*.

"André, *mon cher,* order *les* cucktells immediately. Dginn. It's dginn you must ask for."

We protested that we preferred tea.

"*Ah, ça, non.* We know very well tea is for the English, cucktells for the Americans. We shall be hurt if we are not permitted to offer— But look, *mon cher,* there goes the ship's doctor. Run quick and see about the milk. Two cases."

"The milk—ah, yes. Pardon, Mesdames. Docteur . . ." Dr. C. started in pursuit of the ship's doctor, and then Madame was reminded of the whirlpools. "André, look whether we have reached the whirlpools. You have never seen them, Madame? But they are *épatants.* Come, let us go to the front of the boat, they are seen best from there. No, I cannot leave the baby. Hurry after André, he will show you the whirlpools."

Unable to think of any reason for not going, we streamed down the deck after André, who was pursuing the doctor. Ahead of us the river seemed to end abruptly in a rocky hill. We knew that somewhere not too far away around that turn was Matadi. We were uneasy about the luggage. If we were to land it must be taken care of. The river had become a strange mass of oily whirligigs. We caught up with André. He seemed surprised to see us.

"Excuse me, Madame, in just a moment the gin will—but the doctor has a special milk . . ."

"Not gin, whirlpools."

"Ah, yes, the whirlpools. I highly recommend them, but first— Docteur . . ." He fled, and so did we.

The river at Matadi is like a lake of glass reflecting sheer, bare hills. A month before they had been brown, but now, with the beginning of the rains, they had become fairly green. A few dark trees and rugged palms grew in the gullies, and here and there the face of the hills had fallen away, exposing the red soil of Africa. Matadi clung starkly to these hills, bleaker, more businesslike than Boma, with less mitigating shade.

We found we could dine and spend the night on board. Most of the passengers had gone on shore to eat, and most of Matadi had come on board to drink. In the red sunset the river turned to Bohemian glass, and the lava escarpment cut monstrous and black into the pearl-green, quiet sky. The bar and the deck on which it opened were blazing with lights, crowded with pale, wet faces and white piqué jackets soaked with perspiration. There were women, too, in thin dresses and makeup that seemed impervious to heat and moisture. The phonograph played shrill French jazz, corks popped, there was a distracting uproar of voices talking French or Flemish. Only one, unmistakably an American, was speaking English:

"Yes, Ma'am, my name is Black. I represent the Blank Oil Company of Texas and New York." He had a plump, fatherly face and horn-rimmed spectacles. "Meet my friend Mr. White. He's English. He's in oil, too, but a different kind of oil. Palm oil—schoolgirl complexion, ha, ha. Americans here? No, they're sure few and far between in the Congo. Last one was a fellow that had just married or divorced Bebe Daniels' mother, or was it Mae Murray's? Couldn't get the girl, so he married the mother."

"By Jove," cried White, delighted, "a topper, what? Married her mother! Topping!" White, the nice young Englishman, was evidently a great admirer of Black's, who was, he said, putting up at their mess. "Black thinks," White stated with pride, "that we've got as good a mess as you'll find on the West Coast. That's saying a good deal for the Congo. By the way, what ever brought you here? You should have gone to an English colony, Kenya or even Nigeria. There's nothing here. The only up-to-date thing they've got here is aëroplanes. What do the natives think of them? Well, at first they thought they were birds. There were a lot of niggers looking at the

first one, and I told them it would come down pretty soon to lay an egg. And didn't they run like mad when she began to drop, to look for the eggs! Topping, wasn't it, running to see the eggs! But in one way," he continued more seriously, "the Congo used to have it over other colonies—they used to know how to treat the niggers. But that's all spoiled now. Why, it's against the law now to hit one of the beggars. He can have you up in court for it! Fancy that! But they're jolly decent to me at the commissariat. When I send a boy to be whipped they give him just what I say. Oh, I lace into them myself once in a while too, in spite of the law. It's the only way to make 'em work. They ought all to be boiled to make ink, I say. It's all they're good for."

"Poor things!"

"Why? Everybody else has to work in this old world. Why shouldn't they? The Belgians have more sense about it than the French, though. See that well-dressed black man sitting at that table? He's an official in the French Congo. But no hotel in Matadi will take him in. Jolly right, too. You can't encourage these natives. They've got to be kept in their place."

Their place? How often I heard that phrase in Africa, and how often I wondered just where and what the place of the native African was supposed to be! And how often, too, the complaint that the Belgian government will no longer let you hit a nigger was bitterly repeated—although, unfortunately, this well-meant prohibition does not seem to prevent niggers from being hit. Everywhere pallid little men slap, cuff, kick, tall natives who could crush their assailants like flies, but who dare not, of course, raise a hand in self-defense. To be sure, these ignorant, penniless aborigines can—theoretically—take their grievance to court, but the absolutely unthinkable crime

would be to hit back. I tremble to think of the punishment reserved for such an offense.

I remember a dirt levee far away on the upper river. A burly army officer, tall and thickset beyond the average, supervised the transfer of his luggage, and natives, stepping softly, placed trunk after trunk in a neat pile beside the landing. The last of these was a sickly-looking fellow, the black of his skin turned gray with illness or fatigue. He staggered under the heavy load on his head, and as he was lowering it to the ground the trunk slipped and fell. Instantly the officer's fist shot forward and the black was knocked clear across the road. He fell in a heap carefully disregarded by the natives, who passed him hurriedly, laden with cargo. Not one of the whites standing about so much as turned his head to look either at the unconscious negro or at the burly officer, who shook down his cuffs, settled his chin in his collar, and lighted a cigarette. Something evil seemed to have sprung into being, seemed almost visible in the still blaze of violet-white sunshine. You felt suddenly inconsolable, with the kind of ache in your throat that makes a child cry out for solace. After a long interval the native stirred, raised himself on his elbow, was violently sick. When the vomiting was over he staggered to the shade of a warehouse and sank again to the ground. And his own people, walking by him, turned away their heads.

Flogging, when ordered by the proper authorities, is, you are told, a legal measure; and throughout the Congo, in the offices of *administrateurs,* territorial agents, and chiefs of police, the rhino-hide whip hangs ready to command. But alas, the law cannot take into account the officials whose nerves are often at the breaking-point from quinine, heat, fever, and the general weariness of dealing with people whose ways, thoughts,

whose very souls, are incurably constituted not to understand their white masters. To change the native, to bend him to the needs of white imperial commercialism, must unquestionably be a soul-wearing undertaking! But however much one may sympathize with the heavy task of these sorely tried gentlemen, it nevertheless made one uneasy to see that rhino whip hanging so ready before the eyes of a man exasperated beyond measure (however little his fault that condition might be) and half mad with nerves.

It is quite impossible to do justice to the heat that rose next day from the docks of Matadi, from the little tin baggage station, from the railway tracks and shops, the steep lava streets, and all the rock that is the base of Matadi. And how the tall cicatrized savages imported from every part of the Congo, with their filed teeth and green tattooing, sweated and glistened as they toiled in this harsh scene among steel and machinery turned red-hot in the merciless sunshine! And as a completing European touch bouquets of wilted flowers were tied to cranes and hand cars, for it was the name day of the patron saint of dock workers and blacksmiths.

The dust of the Matadi streets bore, to us, a new pattern, the pattern of bare feet, cut across here and there by the imprint of a corded tire. We mounted almost perpendicularly, past a large plaster Christ lodged in a bleak, sun-searched niche, through narrow streets crowded with natives, past shops filled with calicoes and trinkets best calculated to tempt from their pockets or rather their loin cloths the money they had sweated through the grilling hours to earn—mid-day hours which, back in their remote villages, they would have slept away as the elephants do, in the deep shade, in peace. An ingeniously revolting lunch was partaken of in a rather picturesque hotel

whose walls were decorated with the first of that unending series of portraits of the King and Queen of the Belgians that hang on public walls throughout the Congo.

In the afternoon we went to see an official about the things that had to be done to passports before we could proceed. He was a fat, discreetly jeweled, handsome young man in bedroom slippers, with curly lashes and a fancy waistcoat, and he received us in a cool veranda room with the manner of a benevolent opera singer. Outside a group of prisoners waited in the blazing heat. Of these prisoners we were told: First, that they are very often men who have done nothing worse than fail to pay their taxes; but the government, needing free workers, condemns men to forced labor on the smallest pretext. Second, that only the worst criminals have chains put around their necks and are used for forced labor.

That afternoon, and in that temperature, there was to be a football game—employees of English companies against employees of Belgian companies (but they wait until after four so they won't have to play in pith helmets). We managed to escape going to the football game but could not avoid a visit to the hospital—an amazing expedition, red dust blowing in our faces, a perfectly insane Ford rocking from side to side, skidding around corners, scattering natives, tearing downhill—"because the only way she'll climb up is to get a jolly good start going down." And no time (fortunately) to see more of the imposing hospital than the vestibule and the portraits of the King and Queen of the Belgians.

Chapter 4

LEOPOLD

In a book store in Brussels I looked one day for a readable history of the Congo. Books overflowed on everything; there were books on shelves, on tables, on chairs, on the floor, innumerable people attempting to buy, innumerable dreamy clerks not attempting to sell. Occasionally one of them did plunge into the seas of reading-matter and come up with something—usually, I should think, with the wrong thing—and after a series of such nose dives the second volume of a Congo history was dragged up for me. I asked for the first volume.

"We do not keep the first volume. Only the second."

"Very well, I will take the second. How much is it?"

"Ah, that I do not know. It is so long since we sold any."

"Could you ask?"

"I will see." Presently he returned: "They are going to find out."

"When?"

"Next Tuesday."

Tuesday! Tuesday we would be on our way to Africa!

Perhaps it is just as well that I could not buy many volumes or I might be tempted to dwell too long on the fascinating beginnings of the Belgian Congo, which is the story, really, of Leopold II.

Some one has said that history is only interesting and valuable if it is written with prejudice. Certainly it is easier to read and easier to write if it is, but I have a troublesome prejudice against prejudice, and a tedious habit of perceiving that there are, in the classic words, two sides to almost everything. Moreover the history of Leopold in Africa has so persistently been presented to the world with prejudice that perhaps one may venture now to say a word on the other side. Not many—he didn't give one much chance—but a few.

I suppose, and I have verified the supposition many times, that the first thing and often the only thing most people think of in connection with the Belgian Congo are the so-called "atrocities" and the dire picture of Leopold's emissaries romping about that unhappy country chopping off hands. Just why any monarch, however cynical, should wish to cripple and incapacitate the workers of whom he stood so much in need, is not clear. But it is certain that a whole generation of frightened children shuddered in bed at the thought of an ogerish old king tucking up his long beard and going at the bloody business himself.

In a certain life of Joseph Conrad it is stated that Conrad, going ashore at Boma in the year 1891 (I think), when Boma was a cluster of reed huts and the rest of the Congo a wilderness, came upon a young Irishman dressed in knickers, felt hat, and tennis shoes, and that this young man had just walked across Africa from the east coast to the west with literally no other impedimenta than a walking-stick! (Incidentally this quite true incident should be pondered by those romanticists who are fond of disclosing to the public the incredible dangers of travel in Africa.) But that is beside the point. The point is that Conrad's blithe young traveler was Roger (later Sir Roger) Casement and that he and a certain Edward Morel

were the professional agitators in the campaign against Leopold which blackened his name perhaps for all time and almost lost him his African crown. Nor is it irrelevant to add that one of these gentlemen was hanged for treason during the World War and the other publicly discredited for active disloyalty. But at the time Leopold's Congo affairs were under the microscope, both of these gentlemen were citizens in good repute and directing the anti-Leopold activities in which the British government itself took an active part! Still further I ask you to note that British commerce in the Congo was suffering at that time a severe setback because of the infringement by the Belgian King (or so it was believed) of certain British rights obtained at the Conference of Berlin. So Parliament took action, not on the commercial situation, but on Belgian atrocities, so called, and even went so far as to propose an international (or doubtless, if necessary, an English) instead of a Belgian overlordship for the Congo.

The press, particularly the press of England and America, fell upon the matter voraciously. Belgian misrule became a kind of Anglo-American cause. The hysteria spread to every civilized country in the world. There were investigations, reports, documents. All the demoralization, poverty, disease; all the mutilated bodies, heads without ears, arms without hands, left along the Congo River and its tributaries by the ferocious hordes of Arab slave-traders (whom it must be remembered Leopold drove out)—were laid at his door. Had the world forgotten this Arab reign of terror? Or didn't they know anything about it? Yet they must have known, because it was largely this unholy traffic which gave Leopold a chance to secure his African kingdom.

History has its jokes and its ironies and its accidents, and I don't know to which of these is attributable the fact that

Belgium eventually became mistress of one of the richest colonies in the world. She didn't want it or any other colony. But when fate presented her with a certain line of Coburg princes as sovereigns it fitted her to kings several sizes too big. Leopold II. took from his father the obsessing ideal of empire for Belgium, and with him it became the master idea, the towering, impassioned ambition of his life. And the sins he undoubtedly committed in the Congo were committed in the name of this ideal, not just to line his pockets or hang pearls around the necks of ladies whom unkind rumor has indiscreetly immortalized by linking their names with that of this well-hated monarch. And in accomplishing his purpose Leopold wrote one of the minor epics of history.

When Livingstone found a certain river in Central Africa called the Lualaba, and Stanley subsequently found the lost Livingstone and also discovered that the Lualaba was not the upper waters of the Nile or the Niger as Livingstone supposed but of the Congo and thus a new avenue into the heart of Africa from the west, the attention of Europe became focused on that almost unknown portion of the dark continent. This interest was, at first, purely scientific. But Leopold, the ablest sovereign of his time, a king with the ambition of a Caesar and the brains of a first-class business man, clearly foresaw that it would very soon be political as well. He was the first to realize the international importance of Stanley's discovery, and he knew that when the curtain went up on a new theater of European aggression it was the first comer who got the best place. In this case the best place unquestionably was the Congo basin, rich in itself, potentially a great commercial highway and the route of domination in equatorial Africa. But he also knew only too well that his people did not want the best place in Africa or any place at all. So we have the spectacle of a king

about to secure for his nation an imperial possession of incalculable richness, obliged to proceed as if he were going to rob a bank.

He advanced under a series of international and philanthropic disguises. He appealed to public sentiment against the Arab slave raiders who were looting and depopulating the upper Congo country and pretended to create merely an international anti-slavery organization; he played one European jealousy against another; he took a leaf out of our North American history and sent Stanley to Africa to make treaties between the Congo kings and a political hypothesis later known as the Congo Free State—treaties such as, long before, France and England, and later our own government, made with the American Indians, by means of which things were got from them which they didn't want to give and didn't know they were giving. The Congo sovereigns, flattered by the attention and greedy for the beads and calicoes on display, signed the mysterious documents without any faint idea of what it was all about. But these treaties would, Leopold thought, read well in diplomatic conferences in Europe—and they did. In a word, so skillfully and persistently did he labor that at last this constitutional king of the Belgians got himself made absolute ruler of an African state I don't know how many times bigger than Belgium.

It was his private affair. It had to be. He had to take it in order to give to Belgium a colony which Belgium neither could nor would take for itself, and the cost of his colossal undertaking nearly ruined him. He was a rich man, but when was an empire founded on the private fortune of one man until Leopold did it? He drove out the Arabs, he subdued the natives, explored the wilderness, built a railroad around the lower falls, established trade routes and commercial com-

panies and made the Congo pay. There is no doubt that, carrying the weight of an empire on his own shoulders or rather his own pocketbook, he often needed money desperately and that desperately the land was squeezed of rubber and ivory to insure the success of his passionately cherished idea. Moreover, if these peoples, utterly demoralized by the slave trade and incessantly fighting among themselves, were to be subdued at all, it had to be done with a strong hand.

There were abuses, yes, more heartbreaking perhaps than Empire usually inflicts. But what weaker country has been seized and exploited by a stronger that greed and cruelty have not played their sickening part? And why were the abuses almost equally plentiful in other colonies never touched upon? What was the real political story back of that persecution?—a persecution of which the proud old king once remarked, "It is the food for imbeciles. History will judge me."

When Leopold first became independent sovereign of the Congo, he made a will bequeathing his African empire to Belgium. Twenty years later, he was old and tired and ready to turn over to his country a gift which, he had once prophetically said, "may sometime be her salvation," and which, in her time of after-war need, was. It was a gift that would insure for all time her economic security; indeed, it is said that one province alone, the Katanga, could do that, with its copper, radium, coal, gold, and diamonds, its cotton, oils, cobalt, and other raw materials.

The annexation of the Congo by Belgium took place, not without arousing a fury of resistance in the Belgian Parliament, in 1908. The Congo Free State ceased to be, and the private domain of an all-powerful Tsar who had never set foot on the state he created became just a colony like any other.

Chapter 5

A RAILWAY JOURNEY

REMARKABLE things are said in books about the railway journey around the two hundred miles of rapids that block the river above Matadi. Women, according to the reports, have required days to recuperate from the heat, the jolting, the swaying around curves. We had actually dreaded it for months.

Our baggage filled one entire little freight coach. From New York we had brought two moving-picture cameras, 28,000 feet of film, five complete camp outfits—tents, dining-room fly, beds, baths, folding tables and chairs, medicines, powdered milk, canned tomatoes—six great packing-cases full in all. In Paris we had added sixty-eight tin trunks in which our effects could be redistributed in fifty-pound loads—bedding, camp hardware, solera cloth suits with spine pads, helmets, mosquito boots. Nothing, we had innocently supposed, could be bought in all the Belgian Congo!

What hectic packing at that Paris hotel, what preoccupations as to whether the pith helmets should go in with presents for a Congo chief and what gifts would most please a Pygmy! And visitors: "Aren't you afraid of the tigers?" It was always tigers. There aren't any tigers in Africa, but the word seems to have a much greater charm for people than lion. And plenty of advice. One friend drove in from the country to ask

THE JUNGLE WALLS OF THE CONGO

(*See page 22*)

ONE OF THE WOOD-YARDS WHERE THE KIGOMA RE-FUELED

us if we remembered safety pins. Safety pins, he said, always meant for him the difference between a successful trip and a complete washout. Rooms filled with wrapping-paper, trunks, excelsior; somebody stuffing more quinine and carbolic acid into the medicine chest; somebody else trying on a monocle to which was pasted a glass eye which you could illumine from a small battery with startling effect—a gift for a Congo king.

Then the last night in Paris—music in a beautiful old drawing-room where Adrienne Lecouvreur died in Voltaire's arms —poisoned, it is said, by a jealous duchess. And rising above the wistful modern dissonances seeping out of the piano, Somebody's voice from the next room: ". . . that Greek who had the tin-roofed shack on the upper Congo and kept the skull of the elephant that killed his brother. The elephant hunters used to hang around there and shoot at it. It was full of bullet holes."

Voltaire, Ravel, the Greek whose brother was killed by an elephant. . . . In Paris the fabulous unreality of the Congo had shed glamour even upon the two and a half tons of (mostly unnecessary) luggage—a glamour which even survived the labors of getting it aboard the *Brazza!* All luggage which goes to Africa must, for some reason, go as hand luggage, and ours became an unending affliction. It had been got with much labor through the Matadi customs and now, in the cool of early morning, waited aboard the Kinshasa train—a string of toy coaches and a pygmy Malet type engine, looking like an 1850 print. A piece of paper was pasted on the outside of every coach with the names of the passengers misspelled upon it and their places in the coach indicated. Baggage and a large cage containing our monkey took up all the room on the back platform so that the brakeman, a scarecrow in the torn rags of an old golf suit, had to sit on the railing, where

he found it difficult, but not impossible, to sleep. Away up in front, the bare black legs of the fireman and engineer could be seen dangling over the side of the locomotive. The chief occupation of these men seemed to be to blow the whistle, which never stopped from Matadi to Kin.

The proud but gloomy boast of old-timers in the Congo is that those 360 kilometers of narrow-gauge track cost the life of a native for every tie and of a white man for every three. The laborers were imported from every part of the Congo and from Asia. They were not acclimated; food was scarce and hard to collect in sufficient quantities. Materials had to be carried on the backs of half-starved men over cruelly rough country under a murderous sun. Epidemics carried away thousands of blacks; dysentery, malaria, and blackwater had their way with the whites. It was a killing job, but it was the keynote of development in the Congo. Before it was begun five steamboats had been carried, in pieces, over that same terrible trail and put together above the falls, a two years' undertaking carried out by Stanley.

Uphill and downhill, over goodness knows what grades, cutting figure eights, almost doubling on itself around curves that were not curves but right angles, panting, puffing, whistling, the little engine switched its tail of swaying wooden coaches over a roadbed that gave you the illusion of traveling a hundred miles an hour. There didn't seem to be any conductor—it wasn't until the next day, I believe, that a black official of some kind turned up and strolled through the train.

At noon the narrow aisle was filled with lunch-boxes; cinders and dirt an inch deep coated sandwiches and passengers, bottles of red wine were hurled from improvised tables. The train started and stopped with jerks that all but decapitated the

travelers, and yet it was all somehow very pleasant, and why ladies should have to convalesce from it for weeks still remains a mystery.

Outside stretched a bleak and hilly Africa, bare, at times, of anything but thorny shrubs. The stations were neat, thatched huts of reeds or stucco; half-naked native station masters started the trains with bugles of antelope horn, and women with tattooed shoulders and earthen jars balanced on their heads stepped swiftly and proudly through the coarse grass, returning to villages we could not see.

The train came to a dead stop. No station, a sudden overwhelming quiet. Rain began to fall softly, and the liquid notes of a little hand harp coming apparently from nowhere fell like drops of water into the well of silence. The train was as motionless as if it had taken root. At last the rumor came that the engineer on the first section—the train had left Matadi in two sections—had forgotten to take water at the last station and had had in consequence to put out his fires. They must send ahead to Thysville for another locomotive.

The whole world was swallowed up in a gray deluge. Evening came. We moved forward slowly, passed Section One on a siding. Dirty lunch-boxes reappeared. Fires glowed in native huts, filling low doorways with a golden radiance, and dark figures leapt out to yell and gesticulate and dance as we rushed past. An acetylene searchlight threw a round beam as big as a pancake along the road ahead; the coaches were feebly lighted by smoky lamps.

It was after midnight when we got to Thysville, the highest point on the road. High and cold. A big white-plastered hotel, all wide verandas, glaring lights, portraits of the King and Queen of the Belgians, seething, shivering passengers, stupid, unwilling, incompetent boys, a pale clerk trying to disentangle

reservations and find rooms for everybody. The sweat poured from his face and his hands were shaking. A long go of fever, he said.

Most of the next day's journey was through savage country which gradually became more blooming as we went down to the level of the river at Kinshasa. As the train rattled whistling fiercely through the scrubby forest, somebody's helmet blew off. In some mysterious way the tattered brakeman got the ear of the far-off engine driver, the train slowed down, stopped, the brakeman languidly strolled away up the track and retrieved the helmet.

Down we went over grades as steep as a roller coaster. It became suddenly hot, tracks multiplied, railway shops appeared, and glimpses of a river as big as a lake—Stanley Pool—and then the station at Kinshasa.

A little sallow man with red-rimmed eyes slapped and cuffed big natives who seemed to be handling baggage well enough. He was the clerk at the hotel, and sick. He didn't know, he told us later, how he could stick out the rest of his term with a liver any number of times bigger than any liver ought to be.

Chapter 6

AN EQUATORIAL CITY

At first glance Kinshasa gives one the rather uninteresting impression of a boom town (a mildly booming town) at home where the weather is hot and real-estate values temporarily high. There were trees, but not enough trees; new-looking stucco buildings built tropical style; hard streets coated with fine pink dust; no sidewalks; rubbish, vacant lots, goats wandering, dodging automobiles. But, except at first glance, Kinshasa is not in the least like a frontier town at home and it is not uninteresting, as we had ample time to discover. The steamboat for the upper country did not leave for two weeks and we spent that interval attending to things we imagined must be done here—the taking on of boys and securing of supplies for the first 1000-mile lap of our journey into the heart of this strange land. And the thrill of the impending journey, the thought of primitive Africa beckoning, but seeming to back away as she beckoned, invested even the Kinshasa hotel with a charm and gaiety which, in retrospect, do not seem otherwise justifiable.

This caravanserai was a huge galleried affair of brick and steel, the three tiers of galleries giving it a skeleton look. Clean, bare rooms opened on one side on breezy corridors and on the other on outside galleries where the washing of the guests hung along the railing to dry, where black boys interminably

cleaned white shoes, and people in underwear wandered, taking things out of tin trunks and peeking (the impulse was irresistible) into other people's rooms. Who, everybody always seemed to be asking himself, could the other white people be? What were they doing in the Congo, in Kinshasa, in their rooms? And being Americans we suffered I suppose, more than anybody from this illicit concern with other people's affairs.

Nor did the climate encourage closed doors. I was dressing for dinner in the hot twilight when I became aware of a presence, and looking up, saw a small face peering at me around the door with a kind of mischievous and whimsical intentness. A little gray-brown monkey stood on his hind legs. He had a patch of white fur across his nose, bushy white side whiskers, and he swung himself with astonishing rapidity from door to bedpost, to chandelier, to the top of the cupboard. Like a flash he uncorked bottles and emptied their contents on the floor, rushed off with brushes and powder boxes, leapt on my shoulder, and when I tried to touch him, disappeared out of the French windows as if on wings.

The food at the Kinshasa hotel was as unredeemably bad as it is in most public eating-places in the Congo, and the huge dining-room, hung with portraits of the King and Queen of the Belgians, blazed with electric lights that went out each evening, just before, during, or immediately after dinner. Barefoot black boys slouched in and out of the room, waiting at table with an air of numb and sullen detachment but keeping the tail of a worried eye on the liverish little manager who was so handy with kicks and cuffs. These youths looked strangely out of place in their clothing. Scanty as it was—a two-piece uniform consisting solely of very short knee pants and a blouse—the costume did not go in the least with the

patterns which had been carved into their brown skins in early youth and which seemed to call aloud for the ancestral loin cloth and nose ornaments of polished bone.

The hotel was overrun with boys—all servants in the Congo are called boys or rather "buoyees," for the Belgians do not translate the term into French but keep the English original, pronouncing it "buoyee." There were the servants of the hotel, the private boys of visitors, and boys looking for jobs. All seemed unwilling and dull. In this part of the Congo nobody gives an order or addresses a native in any other tone of voice than a furious and threatening shout, usually in words they don't even understand. And it seems that they, like children who are perpetually scolded, have given up all hope of pleasing or receiving commendation and have settled down to a state of effortless incompetence. City life also has a bad effect on them. Natives in the bush are in every way superior to these half-civilized buoyees—though after one has been in Central Africa the word civilization requires quite a lot of defining.

When dinner was finished, flood-lights poured a violet glare over the terrace back of the hotel, over a wooden dance-floor and crowds of little tables. There was a chalk-white balustrade on which a short-legged black goat strolled, and near by under the palms were dim cages full of the dark figures of monkeys and baboons. On a high platform an orchestra played:

"I want to be happy
But I can't be happy
Till I make you happy too."

Pale colonial gentlemen pushed buxom colonial ladies in dimity and red lip-salve around in the singular terpsichorean idiom for which the U.S.A. will be responsible to history; and the stouter, oldish gentlemen lifted their feet archly and did

all the little fancy steps which all stout, oldish gentlemen on all the public dance-floors of the world seem to be under some wistful compulsion to perform.

Upstairs on our gallery it was hot. No breeze, the air filled with the deadly song of mosquitoes—no, it is the deadly ones that don't sing—anyhow, mosquitoes. The sky was like a well, an abyss over which a snow-white moon hung dizzily. Big night-birds flapped in and out of the branches of an immense old tree in awkward falling flight. The outdoor ballroom had become dark, and from the servant quarters the notes of a little hand harp fell liquidly.

I had been asleep some time. I waked up suddenly, aware that all was not as it had been. In the pale light from the gallery I saw a long, tapering, sinuous black object, coiled, whiplike, snakelike, on the mosquito-netting roof of my bed. I shrieked, and the long tail of the little white-faced monkey who was perched invisibly on the bedpost slithered across the net and disappeared in his wake. But he soon came back and swung mischievously on the netting, acting as if he knew it would tear.

It was decided, I don't know just why, to buy in Kinshasa all the food we should need not only on our safari in the forest beyond Stanleyville but clear across into East Africa! Perhaps we were impelled to this extraordinary decision by the discovery of the fine Kinshasa shops with their shiny plate-glass windows and stocks including almost everything we had brought from New York, Paris, and Bordeaux, and bearing the queer synthetic trade-names we were to see throughout the Congo—Sedex, Cominex, Socoma, and a dozen others. At any rate pencils came out, lists were made, and the result of it all was that two tons of food were bought and packed in sixty-eight chop-boxes, each with a different key, and made ready

for our journey up the Congo. This two tons did not include the cases of canned tomatoes and powdered milk we had brought from America!

We proceeded to the taking on of boys in equally innocent fashion. The tradition is that every white person traveling in Africa must have a personal servant in constant attendance. This boy washes your clothes when you are on steamboats or in hotels, puts up your bed on safari, prepares your bath, takes care (supposedly) of you and your personal effects at all times. And from the moment you land in Kinshasa buoyees accost you in the street, follow you down hotel corridors, wait outside your door to thrust identification books in your face and ask for a job. Six of these stray, jobless boys—we saw afterwards why they were out of jobs—we casually engaged. It was the way, some one told us, people did in Africa.

There was Sindani, whose papers, while they stated that he was a cook, made no comment on the quality of his cooking. They merely set forth the fact that he had faithfully nursed his master when the latter all but died in the *brousse*. That any one could experience his cooking and not die was the marvel of our subsequent journey. But Sindani was a good boy. His face was so gashed and slashed with tribal cicatrizations that his small, worried, entirely savage features were almost indistinguishable from these decorations. But his smile came straight from a true and faithful heart.

Not satisfied with one cook, we hired two. Michel was a languid black man whom we got all the way to Stanleyville, suspected of having amoebic dysentery, and fired with infinite and extremely comic difficulties. Kole was a clean, very black, rather handsome, mysteriously depressed, and irreproachably dressed young man with a fine line of green tattooing down the middle of his forehead and the exact center of his nose.

Kole did not seem to understand French—none of the boys, with the exception of Gabriel, did—but all disclosed through an interpreter that they were masters of the language and would understand us perfectly when they became accustomed to our voices. Kole was mine; I engaged him because he was clean and nice-looking—insufficient motives, I afterwards realized, for hiring anybody. During the five months I was closely associated with this boy he never displayed the faintest sign of even the most rudimentary intelligence except when it was a question of securing some article of adornment for himself—then for a few moments he became electric, almost inspired. He spoke words, he smiled, he was ingratiating, alert, gave evidence of being actually a human being. Gabriel was a fat mission boy from the French Congo. He had a fat face, a fat stomach, and a ginger-colored skin, and could not step off the veranda of the hotel without pasting innocent bystanders in the eye and involving us in constant trouble. But when poor Sindani was lying unconscious beside his kitchen fire in the Ituri forest and six of the safari were down with fever or dysentery, Gabriel came wonderfully into his own. There was a gun-boy called Madjeduka or something that sounded like that. He was an ex-soldier who insisted on wearing the uniform in which it was against the law for him still to appear and a pith helmet over his fez. His bland, rather beautiful face had the complacent innocence of a three-year-old child who is young for its age, and he humiliated us all through the Congo by informing officials that we had hired him to kill elephants for us! Ipoka was a shrewd English sparrow of a boy, a kind of Kinshasa poolroom rat if there were such a thing. He was probably no more dishonest than the others but only seemed so because he was smarter.

Such was the small retinue—or rather a part of the retinue—

with which we took our way month after month through the heart of the Congo. The wages of these young men were 150 Belgian francs or about $4.50 a month each. They received in addition to this $.60 a week for food, a ration allowance which was considered insanely extravagant in the upper country, while the wage was so excessive we never dared admit we paid it.

Our troubles with these terrible boys were not long in beginning. The day after he was hired, Gabriel appeared at the hotel with a sick stomach and a black eye. He declared that these classic symptoms resulted from the fact that he had been obliged to eat rice without meat. He asked for the loan of 800 francs to make a payment on a bicycle and to buy meat for his rice. Later Madjeduka accosted us, requesting 400 francs to pay a debt for his brother-in-law. Michel's modest demand was for 600 so that he might buy a little home for his aged mother. And we were finally waylaid by Ipoka. He was—most unwillingly—in the company of a friend who had lent him 167 francs the spring before and who, learning that Ipoka was by way of becoming solvent, came to garnishee his pay.

As a Congo native cannot pass from one part of the colony to another without medical examination and civil permits, it was my job to take these young men to the native quarter to visit the specified officials. At the last moment only four out of the six boys turned up. These disposed themselves on the running-board of the automobile, holding their identification cards and books clutched tight in their hands and looking scared. A crowd of boys, women, men, prisoners, and policemen waited outside the office, and a very thin, very yellow, very unkempt young man worked nervously behind a desk inside. There was a several days' growth of beard on his chin, a cigarette hung to his lip, his eyes were red, his fingers were

stained amber from smoking, and his foot swung back and forth incessantly. He greeted me with extreme civility, but the mere sight of the boys seemed to throw him into a perfect frenzy of annoyance. He hurled upon them a look of suspicion and fury, addressing them in a kind of guttural snarl, and seizing their books, ran his fingers through them derisively. Now and then he signed his name with a hand that shook with quinine, pushed the book toward a trembling black, and shouted furiously for the next. Altogether it seemed that his nervous exasperation was raised to its very limit by the mere existence of the African native.

But this stormy procedure was a friendly tête-à-tête compared with what followed. The papers of my boy were suddenly discovered to be not quite in order. An absolutely terrifying roar exploded from the throat of the young official. He shouted questions and refused to wait for the answers, he glared and pounded his fist in a way that made even my insides quake. Kole's black skin turned gray, and when the tirade wore itself out he simply melted from the picture. He vanished so silently, so swiftly, so completely, that I never expected to see him again in the flesh, but there he was at a safe distance behind the motor, serenely and languidly waiting to be taken to the next place.

When the boys were all out of the room a nice smile suddenly and unexpectedly appeared on the face of this singular official. He had seen the name O'Brien on one of our papers.

"An English name," he said. (I didn't contradict him.) "My sister has just married an Englishman in London. But I have never seen him. Soon I will, only six months more. Ah, Madame, *ces noirs,* these blacks! Three years of it from morning till night. I have it over my head. In the end one is beside oneself."

In one corner of the office a naked black man, emaciated and apparently stupefied, crouched, staring at nothing. I asked about him.

"He was one of four porters who escorted a pay officer in the *brousse*. The officer was killed and robbed. The other three were apprehended, but this one wandered in the bush for months. Then we found him. He is mad."

"Does the government succeed in keeping track of every native in the Congo?"

"Well," he smiled a nervous, satisfied smile, "we do pretty well, I must say."

As a matter of fact, what with their cards and books and their identification tags, the aborigines of this supposedly trackless wilderness are as well supervised and organized as the soldiers of a first-class army.

The next visit was to a placid, fatherly man who added his official signature to the preceding ones.

"I will bring the rest of the boys tomorrow," I told him.

"What, more? Are you taking all the boys in Kinshasa off to the *brousse?* And why? You'll find plenty where you're going." A statement we had opportunity enough to verify!

Much more attractive than white Kinshasa is black Kinshasa. About 20,000 natives, many of them imported from different parts of the Congo, live in what is always called in all Congo cities *le village*. *Le village* at Kin is a green, shady, well-swept place with an air of tranquillity and order. There are long, straight streets, little round stucco houses with peaked roofs of thatch, the walls often painted outside with amusing caricatures of white men and the things they use—guns, bicycles, motor cars. There are banana trees and mangoes and palms, gardens of manioc, beautifully built fences of reeds bound to-

gether with vines, clean-swept dirt courtyards, outdoor kitchens with things cooking over fires in native jars or—unfortunately for the visual effect—in white enamel saucepans, which the people particularly fancy and sometimes wear for hats. Although the village is an artificial creation, supervised and regulated by the city, it is essentially native, with a life profoundly its own and apart from the other, white Kinshasa.

In the afternoon the men are away at work and it becomes a world of women and goats and black naked babies and naked babies not altogether black. Man's place in the Congo has always been the home and the women's the field, but where civilization has got a foothold it has reversed the order. Now, in the village of Kinshasa, it is the ladies and not the gentlemen who recline all day in steamer chairs or sit on their little carved ebony stools and laugh and gossip and comb out each other's woolly hair and braid it in a million tiny braids that look like twisted cords; or indolently supervise the boiling kettles; or pound manioc in tall, carved wooden vessels with beautifully cut wooden mallets—white manioc paste wrapped in green leaves and lying on age-blackened wooden trays.

The round tapering arms and smooth shoulders of the women are bare, their dark skins bronzed and gleaming; about them all is a pervading impression of physical grace. They are partly wrapped in richly colored cloth with patterns blurred like batiks—a kind of trade calico copied originally by the English, I believe, from Persian and Indian designs. And they laugh constantly—as they talk, as they work, especially when their eyes rest upon us—our hats, clothes, gestures. And when they laugh they show the gap in the front of their pink gums where the two front teeth were removed upon the occasion of their first love. Only they do not laugh when they ride bicycles, for those grotesque vehicles have penetrated to the native

village at Kinshasa and put ugly white stockings and tennis shoes on polished, tapering brown legs and jumper dresses on firm slim bodies formerly naked or wrapped in that rather lovely stained-glass calico. Alas!

As we turn to leave the village we meet buoyees, laborers, electricians, clerks, dock and railroad hands, all coming back to the village at the hour consecrated by civilization for the return of the working-man. They streamed down the straight narrow streets—hundreds and thousands of them, black men, black girls coming to meet them, black women in courtyards bending over the black pots or sitting on their black stools; black children, low dark huts, melting into the dark shadow of the banana trees and palms. For some reason I looked up. A white moon frail as a fleck of white ash stood in a pearl-white sky and a flock of snow-white birds rose and floated low above the tenebrous village.

"The Governor of the Province has been notified of your arrival and this high personage will be pleased to receive you at eleven o'clock."

Governmentally speaking there is no such thing as Kinshasa. It has been officially decreed that Kinshasa is merely a part of Léopoldville, and it was to Léopoldville we were going to be received by the high personage. (But of course Kinshasa goes right on being Kinshasa, or Kin, as the colonials call it.) The civil and military headquarters of the Province are at Léopoldville, and the Governor General is soon to remove from Boma, the present capital, and establish headquarters here. Deep shade, white plaster softened by green mold, gave an air of relative antiquity to Léopoldville, which has none of the glare and commercial bustle of Kinshasa.

We entered the Governor's friendly white bungalow through

a wide veranda room where clerks were at work and where a blue-enameled iron wash-hand-stand was rather conspicuously in evidence. Several asikaris or native police, in broad sash and fez, lounged about, and one of these ushered us into the presence of the high personage. He was a middle-aged Belgian gentleman, sympathetic, intelligent, simple, and rather tired, the edge of his white coat slightly frayed—a man with a long and faithful experience in the colony. He talked about Belgium's none too simple problems of empire in the Congo, of the scarcity of locally grown food, the universal undernourishment of the native population throughout West Africa; of the difficulty of acclimatizing foreign plants and grains; of the necessity of raising live stock, and of the complications of doing so under the constant menace of the tsetse fly and other pests. He said that Belgium desired not so much to people the Congo with whites who, in many parts of the colony, would always suffer from the climate, but to train the natives to be self-supporting and economically productive. "The colonial policy of Belgium is not domination like that of the English, or assimilation like that of the French, but coöperation. The Congo must remain primarily black and become a business partner of Belgium, furnish us raw materials, give us a market for our manufactured products."

He spoke seriously and hopefully and, I thought, a little wearily. Many years of daily quinine, of an equatorial sun and an atmosphere that weighs like a heavy burden, take their toll, especially of men who work so hard and carry such unceasing responsibilities as the officials of the Belgian Congo. Nor do the commercial companies, either, coddle their employees. There are few places where long hours and hard work are more universal—or more taxing—than in the Congo.

There were moments in Kinshasa of altogether astonishing

THE OKAPI

(*See page* 125)

ROYAL ADVISERS IN THEIR BUSINESS SUITS

(*See page* 111)

heat, and I remember one early afternoon—at which time the temperature does its worst—when we saw a very strange sight. We were going to the Cathedral. The heat surpassed anything that can be imagined. The two blocks seemed two miles. The sun not only burned, but it pressed down upon us with a heavy, aggressive fury, and poured upward too from the red dust of the road. A man, obviously of mixed race but neatly dressed in European clothes, knelt in the square in front of the church. He had spread a clean white handkerchief on the ground beside him, and his felt hat reposed on that; another white handkerchief was spread beneath his knees. His arms were raised above his head in an attitude of supplication and he stared toward the sky, straight into the face of the murderous sun. When we came out of the church an hour later he still knelt in the same posture, his arms still above his head, his eyes still staring into the sun which poured its full violence into them and on his uncovered head.

Stanley Pool was a sheet of pale blue and lavender glass, the far-off hills and sky were glass—earth, sky, and water transparent and as still as crystal. We were on our way to Brazzaville, the capital of French equatorial Africa. At Kinshasa the Congo River is the boundary between the Belgian Congo and the French Congo, and Brazzaville was just across the river. The flimsy boat with an upper deck for whites and a lower for blacks was built around an old wood-burning boiler that roared and shook and seemed momentarily on the point of blowing us up or rather down to the bottom of the Congo.

The approach to Brazzaville is informal; a mud levee, a little path scrambling up a steep dirt bank, a big shade tree under which natives lounged and partly draped *pousse-pousse* boys

shrieked for patronage. In the distance four enormous radio towers pricked the sky: "They are," Dr. C. informed us proudly, the biggest in Central Africa. "But they do not function."

A polite black official pointed to the package I was carrying—a present for the C. children. "You will be obliged to pass the customs."

"But I am only here for an hour."

"Nevertheless you must pay duty on whatever you are importing into the French Congo."

He led me to the tiny customs station and into the office of one of the crossest-looking white men I ever saw. This person stared at me in gloomy astonishment.

"What do you want?"

"I was told I must declare this."

"Who told you?"

"This man."

"Imbecile!" After glaring down the black official he turned his eyes derisively toward my small package. "What is it? Cartridges?"

"No."

"Not cartridges!"

"No, prunes."

"Prunes. PRUNES—" When he could control himself sufficiently he shrieked, "Prunes don't interest me," and pointed to the door, his hand trembling with quinine or fever or maybe just the ennui of policing the port of Brazzaville for cartridges that never came through.

There was a curious but unmistakable difference between the French Congo and the Belgian. The natives looked happier, less disciplined. The lunch, served on the bamboo-shaded terrace of a little inn, was good and presented with a French

amenity. Brazzaville itself gives the impression of a forest clearing, you feel the imminence of the jungle, of a wilder Africa than across the river, of a *brousse* more savage, less investigated and understood.

After lunch we went for a wild sight-seeing ride up and down precipitous roads, the *pousse-pousse* boys running as fast as their legs could fly under a sun that rained down liquid fire. At one point from behind a thick screen of trees came a tumult of voices and young laughter. In answer to our questions the *pousseurs* swerved off the road into a dim tunnel of bamboos, over a rustic bridge, through a little gorge thick with palms, and up into an open place where several unpretentious buildings stood among green lawns and trees. It was a convent school. A young nun in a white robe with a pith helmet over her veil and the pink cheeks and placidly beaming blue eyes that seem to belong especially to nuns, told us the Mother Superior would be glad to receive us.

The latter was a tiny woman with a twinkling, aged face. She had been a friend and contemporary of Brazza and of Stanley and was, we learned later, famous and beloved throughout West Africa. She had established this convent thirty-five years before. It was, she explained, an orphanage and school. A small number of full-blooded native children were kept there, but it was chiefly an institution devoted to the religious training and care of mulatto girls.

"What will you—their fathers go back to Europe and their mothers are incapable of guarding them. Without help, mulatto girls in Africa are in a very sad position. We instruct them, bring them up to be self-respecting and Catholic, and then marry them to mulatto boys trained in the same way by the Fathers." She smiled. "It is simple and convenient and it works well."

She asked us eager questions about ourselves and our journey, chatted in fluent Bangala to our *pousseurs,* watched our departure, smiling gaily, benevolently—a small figure bent, it seemed, by the sheer weight of the torrid sunlight beating on the pith helmet which sat so oddly on top of her *coiffe* and veil.

The *pousse-pousse* boys were like the Ford of Matadi. They had to race downhill in order to get up at all. It was terrifying. We raced through a dreary sun-baked native quarter, *le village,* which for some reason had an air of squalor and desolation entirely absent from the native village in Kinshasa. There was, we were told, an Englishman living there who had gone the primrose way of the tropics. He finally stole money, was put out of Kinshasa, "went bush" altogether, and was now living among the blacks of Brazzaville, supported by a native woman.

The Cathedral stood on a high hill looking down over the river. The ceiling was of sky-blue painted wood, the walls plaster; the crystals of a beautiful old-fashioned chandelier, the kind you see in theaters and ballrooms, trembled in the faint, cool breeze. The floor was almost covered with little black boys preparing for confession and others already whispering in the ears of the patient, white-robed, magnificently bearded fathers in the confessionals—the blacks are, it is said, extremely fond of confessing their sins. The two transept doors framed a wall of terrible African green splashed with the crimson of hibiscus flowers. It was profoundly still except for the soft chatter of a flock of brilliant little birds—I have never heard birds anywhere with voices so low and pleasing as the birds of Africa. The peace, the remoteness, the purity of the place, became almost audible, almost visible, and the little yellow flame swaying before the altar seemed to be burning in the very center of my heart.

The last night of our stay in Kinshasa had come. A young Belgian couple had asked us to a football game that day, but we did not share this extraordinary mania for tropical football, and begged them instead to come to the hotel for tea. He was an employee of one of the big Belgian or English commercial companies and was just recovering from fever. He had had to work several days after falling ill because the black clerks under him were unable to trace a mistake in the accounts.

"That is the trouble, the harassing part, one must do all, everything, oneself." His face was cadaverous, his eyes too bright. "I have only blacks to assist me and they are worthless. It is impossible to count on them in any important matter." He and his wife had supposed, like a hundred other young people in colonial service the world over, that the inconveniences of exotic life would be offset by the cheaper cost of living. But the things which make life gay for clerks and their wives in Kinshasa cost a good deal—clubs, dancing and drinking at the A.B.C.

"I should not have come out here, but there is nothing in Europe just now for a man to do. I speak five languages and I am willing to work hard, but it is impossible to find a job. Times are bad in Europe, but you Americans who all have so much money can't realize it. I wish I could get a job in the United States. These blacks are intolerable. Look, I have hurt my hand just hitting my boy. I hit him and hit him till I am tired. I am convinced that he steals from me in ways I can't prove. You will find the natives better in the interior where you are going. They are better away from the whites. Here they have all our vices as well as their own. And the mission boys are the worst; everybody says so. Here natives are

even allowed to walk on the sidewalks. What right have natives to walk on the sidewalks?"

"But there aren't any sidewalks in Kinshasa."

"Pardon, there are one or two."

"At any rate"—it was an Englishman who now spoke—"the blacks are better than the half-blacks. These mixed bloods are a rotten lot. Snuff and butter we call them in Nigeria." This Englishman doesn't want to be here. He wants to be in England with a *pied-à-terre* in London and a bit of a place in the country. He wears a white duck dinner-jacket every night, mosquito boots with his smart evening dress, and counts the days till he will be going back for a short leave in Europe.

"Then the whites are as bad for the blacks as the blacks are for the whites!" some one said. "What's the good of it all—this business of colonies, of empire?"

"Whether it's good or not, it *is*," replied the Englishman rather sensibly, "and it will be more and more. Anyway it's a question for time to decide. The whole question of empire only time can decide."

The whole sad question of empire—old as Rome, old as Phoenicia and Egypt, old as the need for change and for conquest in the human heart.

A flash of black swept in from the veranda, and an aërial figure landed on our table. The little white-bearded monkey seized a glass of beer, drank it, sailed away to alight like thistledown, first on this table, then on that, drinking, upsetting things, putting the room in an uproar. He swept glasses from the bar, broke bottles, eluded grasping hands, swung by the tail just out of reach, and finally vanished back into the twilight and was seen silhouetted on the high roof against the ghost of a smoky moon undergoing just at that moment a weird tropical eclipse.

After dinner that night we were to go aboard the steamboat for which we had been waiting almost two weeks. The evening was made hideous by Gabriel, who turned up in a state of extreme perturbation. He infested the place like an infuriating bluebottle fly. He had, it seemed, lost a pair of white pants. They were in the hotel laundry, and the hotel laundry would be locked until after the boat sailed next morning. A reasonable effort was made on behalf of Gabriel's trousers until we found there was nothing to be done, and optimistically we dismissed him. But it takes two to make a dismissal. Gabriel lurked about the corridors, he talked to the bar-man, to the *maître d'hôtel,* to perfect strangers, about his pants. He turned up in the most unexpected places, breathing down our necks, muttering pleas, making demands concerning his property. At last he had the colossal cheek to assail the proprietor of the hotel and was promptly kicked down the front steps, only to return a moment later by the back ones.

As the evening wore away, the rest of our retinue gathered. They were all drunk. Madjeduka had his helmet on sidewise on top of his red fez. He could hardly walk. They all had a vast amount of luggage, trunks, mattresses, packages, bags of all kinds. Colonials observed our departure with amazement. They are all to accompany you? So many of them? And with all that luggage?

We drove at midnight to the river front. The *Kigoma* was to sail at dawn. Just after we went aboard, a young man, hatless and seemingly in a great hurry, ran up the outer stairway to the deck. It was the barkeeper from the Kinshasa hotel: "My term in the Congo is up in 1930," he declared breathlessly, "and then I will come to St. Paul, Minnesota, and be your cowboy."

Chapter 7

A THOUSAND MILES UP THE CONGO

We had, in the remote period when we were reading travel books on Africa, been led to expect that we should ascend the Congo on the antiquated hulk of an old Mississippi River steamboat, sleeping in hammocks. But we had already learned that, although the *Kigoma* was in fact a former Mississippi River boat, she was by no means antiquated, and you did not sleep in hammocks. You slept, if you cared to pay for them, in *suites de luxe,* with private sitting-rooms, private baths, even private decks. The walls were tapestried, there were brass beds and easy chairs, softly shaded lights glowed over the open-air dining-room on the rear deck, and there was an ice machine!

In a climate like that of the Congo, extraneous aids to comfort are more welcome than anywhere else, and yet—we had not come these many thousands of miles just to enjoy modern conveniences. And we asked ourselves whether the things we *had* come to see on the Congo River might not have diminished in inverse ratio to the *cabines de luxe.* I do not think on the whole they had, although I am certain of not having grasped the full significance of that amazing journey up the Congo. It would take more than one voyage, I fancy, to do that.

The river is immense, so wide that you could seldom see both shores at once or tell mainland from the innumerable

wooded islands among which the many channels deviously wandered. The current was swift, but it left the surface of the water still as glass where all day long were mirrored silvery clouds and the heat-blanched blue of the sky. At sunset the river turned blood-red, the forest went black, the west took on a wildly glowing and somehow sinister magnificence. At first barren-looking hills followed the valley, then they flattened out, gold-green meadows appeared, and then the forest closed in, changeless and, it seemed, without end. There were a few white men's settlements, woodyards where the *Kigoma* daily took on fuel for her engines, native villages or mere gaps in the jungle showing a few leaf huts primitive as the nests of birds or woodland animals.

Incongruously through the stillness of this hushed and gleaming river world, between the somber walls of the endless, enigmatic forest, the *Kigoma* took her lively way, packed to the last available square inch with a noisy, sweating, heterogeneous human cargo—white, black, yellow, and variously assorted shades of brown. And one wondered what effect they and any number of similar human cargoes could have on a land smothered under the weight of such violent and everlasting vegetation! Skillfully picking her course, the *Kigoma* slid back and forth across the vast, shallow river, seeking the deepest channel, which usually lay along the island shores, guided by white-painted navigation signs startlingly out of place against the gray-green jungle.

The rear deck was the dining-room, walled by the moving panorama of forest and shining river and lighted at night by dim red lights, heavily shaded to keep insects from collecting in altogether unmanageable hordes. There, three times a day, the sweating passengers gathered about long tables—an amazing collection of shaved heads, collar buttons in collarless shirt-

bands, suspenders, ill-fitting, too short, too loose, too high-waisted khaki trousers; the ladies in sleeveless dresses and high-heeled shoes. They were petty government officials with their wives, employees of commercial companies, a few Greek and Portuguese merchants, and five serene white nuns with pith helmets over their veils.

Between meals the dining-room became a club where the passengers played cards and drank mildly alcoholic drinks. And a Portuguese gentleman with a drooping mustache, collarless shirt open over a dubious salmon-yellow undershirt, sat all day with his half-caste wife, their faces a few inches from the horn of a little phonograph, playing "Valencia."

The food tasted like nothing ever eaten on land or sea, the dishes only to be identified by the bits of fur left in the goat stew, the sharp black bristles in the pork gravy, the feathers in the chicken soup. The meat was butchered on board, goats led on with vine ropes about their necks, pigs tied upside down to a pole, their agonized death squeals lending a sinister note to the sudden Congo dawn.

The captain, who lived in strict seclusion on the upper deck with his wife and child, a beautifully groomed white spitz and twelve parrots, was a Swede. The engineer was a Russian, the chief steward an Alsatian who had worked on crack German liners and had been in San Francisco and New York—of which he remembered only that he had there smoked cigarettes which had been toasted. The first mate was a Belgian, a silly brutal man in rumpled white uniform who was always charging about among the natives, dealing kicks and curses for no apparent reason. The rest of the personnel was black.

Two native boys sat all day in the prow, one on each side, sounding the river with long bamboo poles and calling out the depths in loud, melodious voices to someone on the bridge.

One wore a child's straw hat with a sailor ribbon around the crown. Their faces were turned sidewise and they looked away at nothing, chins up, something rapt, half conscious in the way they swayed, jerkily, to the rhythm of the plunging poles. And beside them a black passenger neatly dressed in European clothes installed himself in solemn state each afternoon to read a book. It was printed in English and was called *Practical Occultism*. They say a smattering of foreign trickery added to the medicine man's lore can be very profitable to him and very disastrous to his clients!

The journey was inaugurated for us by a visit from our six personal attendants. Gabriel had prepared a speech. He began by saying in very bad French that as they were leaving their homes and families and all they knew to plunge into the bush, we must be their fathers and mothers, sisters, brothers—their all. At that point we cut his story short. We observed that we did not intend to be the fathers and mothers of six boys who had all been drunk the night before, who fought and borrowed money on fishy pretexts and did nothing else. Gabriel pouted, smiled, asked for an advance on his pay to buy eggs for us at the next village, and led his little band back to their quarters on the lower deck.

This deck was a place to pass with all your senses in abeyance. There the black deck hands and roustabouts, the personal boys, the black passengers with their goods and live stock, were crowded in among luggage, cargo, engines, woodpiles, chicken-coops, parrot-cages, and monkeys belonging to the passengers. They slept anywhere and everywhere and cooked their meals over a kitchen range. Why they didn't set fire to the inflammable-looking *Kigoma* I don't know. The smells that rose from this deck cannot be described, especially

when imperfectly preserved hippo or elephant meat was being transported from one port to another.

The *Kigoma* did not travel at night. At sundown we tied up, usually at a village and woodyard. The steamboat no sooner turned toward the clearing that had opened in the jungle than a wild outburst of yelling assaulted her. Black figures ran toward the shore, plunged into the river, swam out to us. Men and women shouted; children screamed. A wall of chocolate-colored faces waited, white-toothed, with flashing smiles. Two handsome blacks jumped overboard and swam ashore with the steel cables to tie up the *Kigoma.* On land a dozen pairs of hands seized the cables, and as they hauled, a loud chant burst out. Nowhere in the Congo except in white men's towns is work done without singing. And what singing—full-toned, male, beautiful, with a rhythm that lifts the very roots of your hair! Then two swaying wooden planks were thrown from the lower deck to the muddy bank, and the wood carriers followed each other in an unending procession on and off, their heavy loads falling with a crash on the steel deck.

Often it was after dark when we reached the village. On shore small fires had begun to gleam, and the woodyards were swallowed up in darkness. We picked our way down the unsteady planks, dodging wood-carriers and women selling bad-smelling food to the black passengers or sitting by little fires cooking things on spits. The smell that rose from the half-naked bodies of all these crowding blacks was almost overpowering—a universal smell which it seemed at first impossible to endure, but to which, after a few months in the Congo, you become so accustomed that you almost fail to notice it. In the path a tiny ring was marked on the ground, a circular fence of vine with hawk feathers and other offerings ranged

about a little altar inside. We asked the wood-carriers what it was, but they pretended not to hear or to see what we were pointing at. All through the Congo the natives hide from white men those beliefs and practices which for a better word may be called religious, and the most competent authorities are obliged to qualify all statements and opinions concerning them.

Beyond the tumult around the woodyards there was a row of shops, brilliantly lighted by gasoline lamps, shelves crowded with the usual canned foods and rows and rows of bottles—when you can't get anything else in the Congo you can always find champagne. Farther along, buried in palms, was a low bungalow, a white woman reading by a shaded lamp and a native soldier with a spiked gun keeping guard in the back. Then, straggling along the dim river road, was the native village.

The huts were long, low community houses built of wattles and thatched. In front small fires burned, three logs meeting like the spokes of a wheel. Men reclined in long chairs beside these fires or lay on native mats under the high dark sky and stars blurred with humidity. In the Congo the position of the head of the household, if he is not forced to do white men's work, is recumbent. Their women crouched beside the reclining men or stood leaning dreamily against the logs supporting the thatch, sleeping babies astride their hips—beautiful, straight-limbed babies with little strings of beads around their waists, wrists, and ankles to keep away the evil spirits. Babies in Africa never cry, and in all the time I was there I never saw a man or woman strike or even speak harshly to a child.

Here was a compound filled only with young women. At first they were shy but gradually drew near, accepted cigarettes, a little frightened by the cigarette lighter or the matches

which they did not know how to handle. Gradually they gained confidence and crowded about us, a mass of small brown-satin bodies. We showed them a mechanical toy. They watched open-mouthed, first in breathless suspense, then shrieking with wonder. They became bolder and more excited, demanded cigarettes, laughed, pushed and slapped each other, soft eyes rolling, watermelon-pink tongues darting in and out. When we went they followed, a tumultuous screaming mob, along the compound fence.

An old woman was sitting alone by a fire. She protested as we came near her, and when we compelled her to put out her hand for a cigarette we saw she was a leper.

Farther down the road a table was set out, and on it burned a yellow-shaded lamp. A head man reclined surrounded by a group of men and women, fat jars of palm wine beside him. They were all slightly drunk and stared at us with dislike and scorn; deep antagonism dared show itself for an hour. The offer of presents did not placate them, the palm wine had made them too much kings for that.

Twinkling fires, soft voices, up-curling smoke, a tree rabbit ringing his little bell over and over in a tree so tall that the smudged stars seemed caught in its wide maternal branches. As we left the village a naked leper rose from his fire and gave us a military salute with the remnant of a hand.

Back at the *Kigoma* a great pile of tin trunks was being unloaded and porters were assembling. A Belgian official and his wife were leaving the boat. She was wearing an evening dress and carried a very clean white poodle with a pink ribbon around its neck. She climbed into a portable chair. The porters put the trunks on their heads. Their magnificent lithe figures, marching single file, passed one by one out of the firelight into

the dark. The little official followed on foot, slapping at them with a stick.

"What masses of luggage people drag about with them in the Congo!"

"It's necessary," a young officer replied. "The blacks don't respect you unless you have a lot. Once I had to make a hurried trip and planned to take only one trunk. My boy wanted to resign. 'Good whites,' he said, 'travel with many.' He had a trunk himself, and when I asked him what he had in it he said, 'Nothing.' 'Then why are you taking it?' 'Because I am going traveling.'"

Not far away a group of prisoners were being bullied and slapped by a native soldier. They were quite old men. In answer to some expression of sympathy our Belgian friend assured us that the natives do not mind punishment if it is just: "The only thing they resent is injustice. I once caught my boy stealing. He was twelve years old. I knocked him down and took my leather belt to him. He's been devoted to me ever since. He adores me. But when my brother, quite by mistake, beat the wrong man, the black gave him poison and killed him."

"You do not mean that your own brother was actually killed by poison?"

"Yes, indeed. Injustice, you know, they hate that," the young man replied almost gaily, as if he saw in the event nothing more than the pleasant confirmation of a theory.

It was at one of these river ports we said good-by to the G.'s. They were going north into French Equatorial Africa on unique and in a way astonishing business. How could the emotion which impelled Monsieur G. to this singular pur-

suit be explained? Easy to say, "Just a hobby." But what do we mean by hobby? Except vaguely, something which in the long run may make you a fearful bore but without which, in the long run, you are sure to be unhappy. But you can't acquire this burning capacity for a hobby at will. You've got to be born that way. I am sure G. was. He was a tall, courtly person with a beautiful, blue-eyed wife, too French to be German, too English to be French, but with something suggestive of and more charming than all three—an Austrian. Him I first saw talking in his uncertain English with all the intentness his ruling passion could not fail to evoke:

"What did it feed it?" he inquired, peering earnestly at his companion. The latter was telling him about some gorillas he had captured in the Kivu country and G. was telling about his own previous trips to Africa.

"Milk," was the reply.

"Ah, milk. But I was able to feed my dick-dicks grass—no, not grass. Pardon, Madame, what is it you call grass that is no longer grass?"

"Do you mean hay?"

"Yes, thank you, that is it." He rose, clicked his heels together, and bowed from the waist. "Hay. I was able to feed them hay."

These dick-dicks (a species of tiny antelope no bigger than a rabbit) were apropos of Mr. G.'s second trip to Africa, taken because of his incomprehensible passion for a certain zoo in Austria. He was not a naturalist by profession but a banker with a strange vocation for prowling about the more inaccessible parts of French Africa, capturing wild animals to take back to his darling zoo. He was not a young man or a particularly strong one—on both previous trips he had been ill with almost fatal dysentery. He was nervous, apprehensive,

BREAKFAST TIME

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PYGMIES ON AN ANT-HILL

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fastidious to a painful degree and had a horror of natives. He was not paid to make these trips to the sad and menacing continent of Africa. Why then did he do it? For reasons doubtless which he could not himself explain. The museum in return has named a certain species of small monkey after him.

His first journey was to North Africa; his second, with Madame G., to the French Soudan and Timbouctou. They lived in native villages for months waiting for the people to trap and bring in the animals. They secured ostriches, antelopes, jackals, monkeys, a baby lion, swans, and a dozen other animals and birds which I have forgotten. Then with this ambulating zoo on one flatboat, themselves on another, a handful of surly, undisciplined blacks to help clean and feed the beasts, they and their modern Noah's ark floated down the Niger River for a matter, I think, of four months. They finally reached the coast, put the animals on board a steamer, and took them to Europe. Only one or two of the smaller ones died.

This time their purpose was to secure two live giraffes and a baby rhinoceros. They had a case for one of the giraffes with them; the other would have to be made on the spot. The case weighed 1000 pounds and was, Madame G. assured us, just like a little house: "We could turn it upside down and live in it," she observed, smiling her ladylike smile. Their greatest worry was the question of milk for the baby rhinoceros, as it is exceedingly difficult to transport enough canned milk to sustain so gigantic an infant for several months. "And a baby rhino, Madame, will, I assure you, drink you up easily a case of milk a day."

Mr. G.'s plan was to take the animals out by motor truck, but Madame assured us that this was not possible, as it would take not two or three, as he thought, but eight or ten trucks to transport the caravan.

"What will you do then?" we asked her.

"Use boats when we can and for the rest of the way walk and lead the animals."

"Lead them! Put leashes around the necks of the giraffes and a dog collar on the rhino?"

"For the giraffes, yes, but after a day or two it is said that a baby rhino will follow you like a pet."

And this charming lady and gentleman did actually, we learned many months later, proceed along the sun-baked routes of the French Congo, with their fabulous menagerie. The giraffe walked 1000 kilometers on a leash!

Coquillatville is the only important town between Kinshasa and Stanleyville. It stands exactly on the equator, and the temperature the day we landed was all that could be expected of a town so situated. A ragged, unfinished, deserted-seeming town with the look of a place which some one had decided was to be a city and which had refused to come so artificially into being. And it was here we first heard the strange rumor that the U.S.A. is plotting ways and means to grab the Congo!

There are important botanical gardens at Coquillatville where experiments are made in palm-oil trees and rubber—wild rubber is no longer commercially valuable, and the Congo is not yet exporting cultivated rubber in important quantities. And here we visited a Protestant mission, the first large Protestant mission we had seen. The establishment included an orchard, a corn field, gardens, bungalows facing each other along a shady road, a printing-press, school, church, and a hospital which the doctor invited us to visit. There was also a clinic conducted by black assistants where natives received various specific treatments. Much of the equipment was hand-

made and the object of tender pride to the doctor, whose work it was.

"Leprosy is too prevalent for us even to attempt to care for it. We work chiefly with syphilis, sleeping-sickness, malaria, and skin diseases. We are constantly enlarging the hospital, but the need grows still faster, and it is never big enough."

Aside from the fine spirit and work of the doctor, the mission was not impressive; unkempt gardens, a drearily ugly church with dead flowers on the dusty altar, natives dirty and, I thought, far from respectful. The only other missionary we met here was a smiling, oily man with false teeth and a hard hand-clasp who bade us good-by.

In a brilliantly lighted little café on the waterfront a few pale white men and women drank sundowners, primly, I thought, and sadly. These people, Coquillatville with its new stagnation, the mission, all the unanswerable questions that constantly present themselves along this equatorial frontier, were vaguely depressing, and I was glad to be back on the *Kigoma,* where I was unexpectedly cheered by reading the singular reminiscences of an English hippo hunter.

The English are extraordinary. Ordinarily hippo hunting is about as sporting as plugging at grazing cows, but this gentleman developed a technique of his own. He set out into a hippo-infested river in a light canoe, managed to infuriate the animals, and when one of them upset the boat and charged with gigantic mouth open to swallow him, he seized the canoe and rammed it down the beast's throat! At least that is what it said in the book.

Insects were often so numerous at these nightly stopping-places that we could not light the lights in our cabins. These were thoroughly screened, but the myriads of strange flying

creatures paid as little attention to screens as Houdini did to padlocks. And during the day the boat swarmed with the dreaded tsetse flies. We were constantly being bitten by them but were assured that only one out of a million or a billion gives you sleeping-sickness.

Only once on the journey did we have a storm. It was a mild but spectacular display—lilac flares in the sky, rumblings of thunder, jungle wringing its tops like despairing hands. Darkness had come, and we had not reached our stopping-place. The searchlight played dramatically over the writhing forest, seeking out a place for the boat to tie up. Outside its brilliant sphere the world vanished into blackness; rain fell in torrents. The *Kigoma* crowded close alongshore, crashing into trees and overhanging brush. Great branches pushed across the railings, crowded against the walls of the cabins. Men swarmed up the trees, cutting away branches; crawled along the decks, hewing at the intruding jungle and sweeping away ants and centipedes. From time to time the dark river, the sky, the waving forest and slanting rain, became luridly visible in a sweeping flare of lightning. The storm soon subsided, but we remained crushed against the breast of the forest until dawn.

In the morning after we were under way, a dugout paddled by six men hailed us. We stopped, took aboard a black and white duck and a basin of greens for the captain, and put into the canoe letters, a bottle of medicine, and a cake of ice. Was it to cool a lonely man's highball or pack a fever-racked head? We wondered. Then the dugout put off and slipped rapidly out of sight along a gleaming waterway half hidden by overhanging creepers and was lost in the jungle.

Almost every day our entire staff boiled up on to our deck, menacing each other and erupting floods of Bangala and bad French. Today it was about Sindani, whom the other boys—his

mortal enemies because they were city boys, while he was from the *brousse*—accused of refusing to wash clothes. All he did in self-defense was to wrinkle up his worried savage face and say yes to everything.

"Are you willing to wash clothes?"

"Yes."

"Are you unwilling to wash clothes?"

"Yes."

"Is Gabriel lying?"

"Yes."

"Is he telling the truth?"

"Yes."

This remained the limit of all verbal understanding ever reached with Sindani.

The washing and ironing of the passengers' clothes is one of the foremost activities on board. The laundry hangs all day on the railings to dry, and in the passageways languid boys dreamily pass a charcoal iron back and forth over pink lingerie, muslin dresses, and white duck uniforms.

Michel, our second cook, came down with dysentery. The steward said there was a doctor on board, but he did not advise me to ask him to look at a black: "He would be offended."

It was in the early, drowsy hours of a suffocating afternoon. Dr. C. approached, smiling ceremoniously, and invited me to take part in a French bridge game. There were Dr. C., his wife, and a certain lieutenant, and we seated ourselves in a little storm of politeness. Madame prefers this seat? Monsieur is comfortable? As you wish, if you please, but no, but yes, a thousand thanks, and so on. The cards were cut and dealt, nothing being said about stakes. I got the idea, I don't know

just why, that they were novices at the game. During a rapid fire of irrelevant conversation the bidding began. The lieutenant bid; Madame, who was my partner, bid; I bid.

"Oh, no, no, no, Madame," shouted the lieutenant. "Not that. You can't bid hearts."

"Why not?"

"Because it is quite plain you cannot have a heart bid. Bid four spades."

"But I haven't any spades. At least—"

"Never mind, it is the bid. The American lady says four spades. I say four no trumps."

Madame C. led.

"My dear Madame," the lieutenant bellowed, "impossible to play a diamond when your partner has the queen dry. She has the queen dry, hasn't she? Never mind, I know it. Take back your diamond."

Dr. C. was roused to protest. "But, my old one, even if the American lady has the queen dry, my wife has the—"

"It doesn't matter, in the fifth round the seven of clubs will take."

"Ah, *pardon, mon vieux,* that I doubt."

"Ah, *pardon, mon vieux,* doubt if you like. But you will see."

In the meantime Madame took back the card she had led and doubtfully put down another. Her husband's eye fell upon it.

"My God, what's that? Never, the great never should you have played that, since you have the king."

"But I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought, you shouldn't have played it."

"Mais oui!"

"Mais non!"

"Mais oui, I tell you—"

"Mais non, non, non! Squarely NON. Truly, my friend, you play badly."

"Pardon, my friend, I do not play badly. In the home of my parents as a very small child I played cards. *Le* whist. In my earliest childhood I played *le* whist. It has given me a feeling for cards."

"Well, you play badly when I am there."

"That's what my husband always says, Lieutenant, that I play badly with him."

"Madame, you play well, you play divinely. Only you make mistakes. Good God, the American lady plays the six. Take it back. Play the valet. You don't mind my telling her; *mon vieux,* since she doesn't know the game?"

A violent discussion arose between the two men about the seven of clubs. Suddenly Madame, whose lips were a little pinched, interrupted:

"Pardon, mon cher, you should not have said I played badly."

"Pardon, ma chère, I only said you played badly with me."

"Pardon, mon cher, you said I played badly. But in my earliest childhood at the home of my parents . . ."

Another round of bidding; the lieutenant bid no trumps. "The American lady leads," he shouted. "Lead your spade. Lead your ten of spades."

I had it and played it. But I was curious. "How did you know I had it, Lieutenant?"

"Ah, Madame, I am said to be the best bridge-player in France, perhaps in Europe. I can say that myself because it is quite well known. I remember everything, I know the rest by intuition. But I don't mind playing with bad players. One

always learns something. Heavens, have you played a heart? Like that you lose three tricks. Never mind, the rest are mine. Your deal, old fellow. . . ."

As we mounted the river a sense of the wildness and nearness of the forest grew. Everywhere boys swam out or boys and women in canoes paddled out, shrieking frantically for bottles, plunging overboard to retrieve them. The rushing Congo was filled with children, many of them mere babies, swimming, paddling with consummate skill. Hundreds of canoes dotted the immense river, each boat just a thin, black line curving sharply up at each end, standing paddlers drawn in with one stroke of the brush, the tall paddles making a slantwise pattern across the picture.

Today our village consisted of a sun-baked plaza with enormous clay ant hills like little fortresses eight or ten feet high, on the top of which goats perched to stare down at us. A chief, with a leopard-skin headdress and a heavy European winter overcoat, reclined in the square. He wore on his chest a medal as big as a saucer, one of those given to chiefs by the Belgian government in official recognition of their rank. There were no white men's clothes here and the naked bodies were slashed from head to foot with patterned scars. Withered old women impassive in monkey-fur wigs stared at the steamboat. One young woman, naked except for a strip of banana leaf, proudly held an umbrella over the naked baby who was pulling her breast sideways to suck. These people love umbrellas. They hang them in their houses, in their tombs; rich men collect them.

There was a frightful prevalence of skin disease in this village. A woman held out a pitifully infected foot, begging us for medicine. Impossible to explain that we could not do any-

thing, especially in half an hour, for a foot that obviously ought to be cut off. Crowding the little village on three sides was the jungle. You felt its breath like a waiting animal held back for the moment, but patient. How swiftly it could blot out this insignificant opening!

Native villages were now strung uninterruptedly along the river, and we were seldom out of the sound of signal drums. The fashions for women changed. They wore copper ornaments covering their arms from wrist to elbow, from ankle to knee; heads were shaved in fantastic patterns, leaving a tuft of hair in unexpected places; a white man's collar button was inserted in the left nostril or upper lip; they wore necklaces of teeth, of bones, of safety pins.

We tried to photograph some of these women at a market place, but they ran away. We stalked them for an hour, assisted by little boys who tried to persuade them to take our bribes and face the alarming little black box. But no. These people had come in from the bush. They had a wild, suspicious look, and seeing them, I could easily believe they would still bury a child alive if its upper teeth came first or put a living twin in the grave with its dead brother! A few hundred yards away from this wild market place were the shining modern brick factory buildings of the great Belgian palm-oil company with electrically run machinery! And as an inevitable complement to the presence of civilization three black men, chained together, worked in the noonday sun, digging earth out of a side hill and carrying it a long way off, a very small box-load at a time.

The end of our thousand-mile journey had almost come. It was evening. The *Kigoma* lay as usual tied up off a village clearing, and the five white nuns were leaning across the railing, throwing little empty quinine bottles into the water. A

fighting, yelling mass of naked men, women, and children dove and scrambled for them, roared up at the nuns, danced in the water, swaying, clapping their hands, singing at the top of their magnificent voices a hymn tune they must have learned at some Protestant mission. They laughed, they sang, they danced with an amazing abandon—not to the acquiring of bottles, but to some emotion which had caught them all up and become an end in itself. Here were none of the rat faces, stealthy eyes, signs of physical and moral degeneracy, you see in a wharf crowd at home. Their bodies were strong, the expression of their faces vital and genuine. The men were very male, the women very female. All had the rare capacity for complete gaiety. How handsome they were! How they laughed, how their eyes glowed! I wondered if the thing they so vitally expressed, their way-to-be, would survive what the white race is bringing to Africa—the rigor of our logic, all the stern, forward-looking, intellectual and scientific process that is *our* way-to-be. Probably not, and when it is gone a definite contribution to the sum of human values will, I think, be lost.

Chapter 8

CHRISTMAS IN STANLEYVILLE

It was the morning of the day before Christmas and hot enough to make Fourth of July in any Middle Western town seem arctic—an ominous heat that began altogether too early in the day. The passengers all hung over the railing eager to arrive, and when at last the jungle curtain opened and the *Kigoma* whistled everybody told everybody else it was Stanleyville; but it was not Stanleyville, only the iron gates of a convent mission. Beyond, however, glimpses began to appear of white men's houses hidden in deep foliage—pink and white villas once gay, now moisture-tarnished, and old, you realized, before their time. Then factory buildings and more houses smothered in regal green; then the two towers of the cathedral, a thickening stream of natives passing with their slow, upright walk along the river road, and at last the steamboat landing.

A row of white men waited along the bank above the levee in the shade of tall trees, splashes of yellow sunlight falling dazzlingly on their clean white duck and white sun helmets. Back of them across the red road were white arcaded shops where native tailors worked at sewing-machines under cool porticoes—a general impression of exuberant sunlit green, of red earth, of shadows slanting across white buildings, of a look

of age, one might almost say of respectability—except that that word is never suggested by anything really tropical.

Along the blazing road motor cars passed; natives pushed plump colonials reclining in *pousse-pousses* or rickshas; white-robed monks with long beards rolled by on women's bicycles, and everywhere were crowds of blacks—town natives in clothes (or rather incongruous fragments of clothes), bush natives in nothing but ornaments of fur and bone, carrying tall spears and bows and arrows and walking swiftly, noiselessly, one behind the other, aloof and strange, different from the rest.

While our luggage was being piled in a neat mountain on the quay a little boy in the ragged waistcoat of a dress-suit, playing a harp, led us up a steep street to the hotel. Before us strolled a huge chimpanzee accompanied by two native attendants. When we stopped to speak to him he looked at us intently and then, holding out a hand to each of us, walked between us, putting on what seemed a kind of mock humility. Suddenly he cast this pose aside; he became wild, rolled on the ground, hurled rocks at natives, tore the clothes off his attendants, and then, as suddenly, was meek again, once more holding out his hands for us to take, fixing us with inscrutable and weary eyes, and proceeding between us sedately as before.

Out of the heat and glare into a twilight place, the walls of which were strangely painted with what looked like bright-red and pale-blue oysters. Red lace hung at the windows and over the doors; there were big wicker chairs and little wicker tables where a few white people sipped warm beer, and a well-stocked bar. Portraits of the King and Queen of the Belgians hung on the walls and there were two posted announcements, one that a gala fancy dress dinner would take place that night at the hotel, the other that the Grand Oriental Cinema would give a performance there the following evening. The wide

doors looked out on a shady road and green square with a fountain of spring water and on a terrace where, when the sun got lower, the little wicker tables would be set and pale colonials would gather to drink warm *apéritifs*.

Processions of natives passed to draw water from the spring, and the receptacles they carried on their heads were, in a way, the chronicle of this tropical frontier—native earthen jars blackened by fire, empty oil tins, zinc pails, white enamel pitchers, gourds with curved necks and sun-dried the color of the brick-red soil.

That afternoon we went to a Sedex or a Socoma to buy each other Christmas presents. But a clerk, into whose sad young life apparently no psychology of boosting or salesmanship had entered, assured us there was nothing fit to buy.

"There is nothing in Stanleyville. Oh, there are trees along the boulevards, and the Governor's house is here, but what is that? Nothing. There is nothing to do, nothing to see, nothing to buy. They say there will be a gala dinner at the hotel tonight. It will be nothing."

Just then a tall black in a loin cloth, with a brass button in his nose and the cartilage of his ears hollowed out, wandered in, carrying a sandwich board announcing a performance of the Grand Oriental Cinema.

"But there is a movie," we ventured.

"Yes, one film. And it's been here four years."

Leaving this melancholy young man, we stumbled into a large warehouse, the floor of which was literally paved with ivory. In the twilight of the vast room we made out brown tusks—tusks taller than a tall man, tusks of every size, bull tusks, cow tusks, tusks so small it seemed a shame to have killed so splendid an animal to take them. Fresh ivory, fossil ivory, natives in blue denim shorts scraping and marking with prosaic

trademarks this most glamorous article of commerce. Stanleyville is one of the chief ivory markets of Africa, and the Ituri forest one of the greatest hunting-grounds for elephants left in the world. Hunting privileges are expensive and severely restricted as to number and kind of elephants killed, but natives are free to protect their plantations against raiding herds, and under the guise of self-defense they kill male and female, young elephants and old. As a pair of good tusks will relieve a whole community from the unwelcome necessity of work for at least a year, it is no wonder they do everything they can to procure them. Throughout the forest we found many of the chiefs supplied with old muzzle-loading guns with which they manage to blow off their hands and occasionally their heads, but with which they do kill a good many elephants. Spears are also planted in heavy logs and hung over the trail, the elephant springing the trap as he passes—the method most frequently used by natives in the Congo. Also native soldiers are now commissioned to kill elephants for victualing the men at work on the new motor roads which, very much to our surprise, we found were pushing their way through the virgin glades of the Ituri.

It was the hour of the sundowner, and the little tables out on the terrace were all full. The afternoon faded into a moth-white twilight, mosquitoes came out in swarms, plying their deadly little hypodermics, and silently crowds of blacks gathered across from the hotel, waiting for the display of fancy dress at the gala Christmas Eve dinner. A young Belgian joined us. He was what they call an agronome, that is, an official of the government agricultural service. He was new at the business and full of enthusiasm, eager to see all the

handsome black bodies clothed in Belgian-made khaki, all the lazy, lordly chieftains supervising their own cotton fields, their harems disbanded and the two hundred singing wives of each married to two hundred husbands instead of one so that the population of Congo laborers shall more rapidly increase!

We waited interminably. Night came. At last, long after dark, a roar burst from the black audience across the road. The maskers were arriving. There was a Chinaman, a pierrot, a red-nosed waiter with Charlie Chaplin shoes. The appearance of each brought a storm of enthusiasm from the native audiences, which, excited but always respectful, crowded as close as they dared. Seeming not to know just what to do next, the masqueraders passed into the bar. Another hour and still no dinner. In desperation the guests went into the dining-room. The barefooted waiters, dressed up in chef's caps for the occasion, looked terrified. It was evident the responsibilities of serving a gala fancy-dress dinner weighed heavily, and their gashed, tattooed faces were sad. Still we waited. Fierce-eyed cats pursued gigantic cockroaches about the dining-room floor, curs slunk in and were engaged in frequent battle by the fox terrier belonging to our Belgian guest, which had taken its place under our feet. At a near-by table a young, rather handsome, violent-looking man with a curly beard and terribly nervous eyes, fumbled his knife and fork with trembling hands. At a table by themselves the six or eight costumed merry-makers sat together without speaking.

Suddenly the nervous-eyed young man hurled his cutlery on the table, wrenched his chair back, sprang to his feet, and rushing to the kitchen door, shouted savagely that the situation was insupportable. Nobody paid any attention to this outburst, and yet it seemed to have an effect, for shortly after-

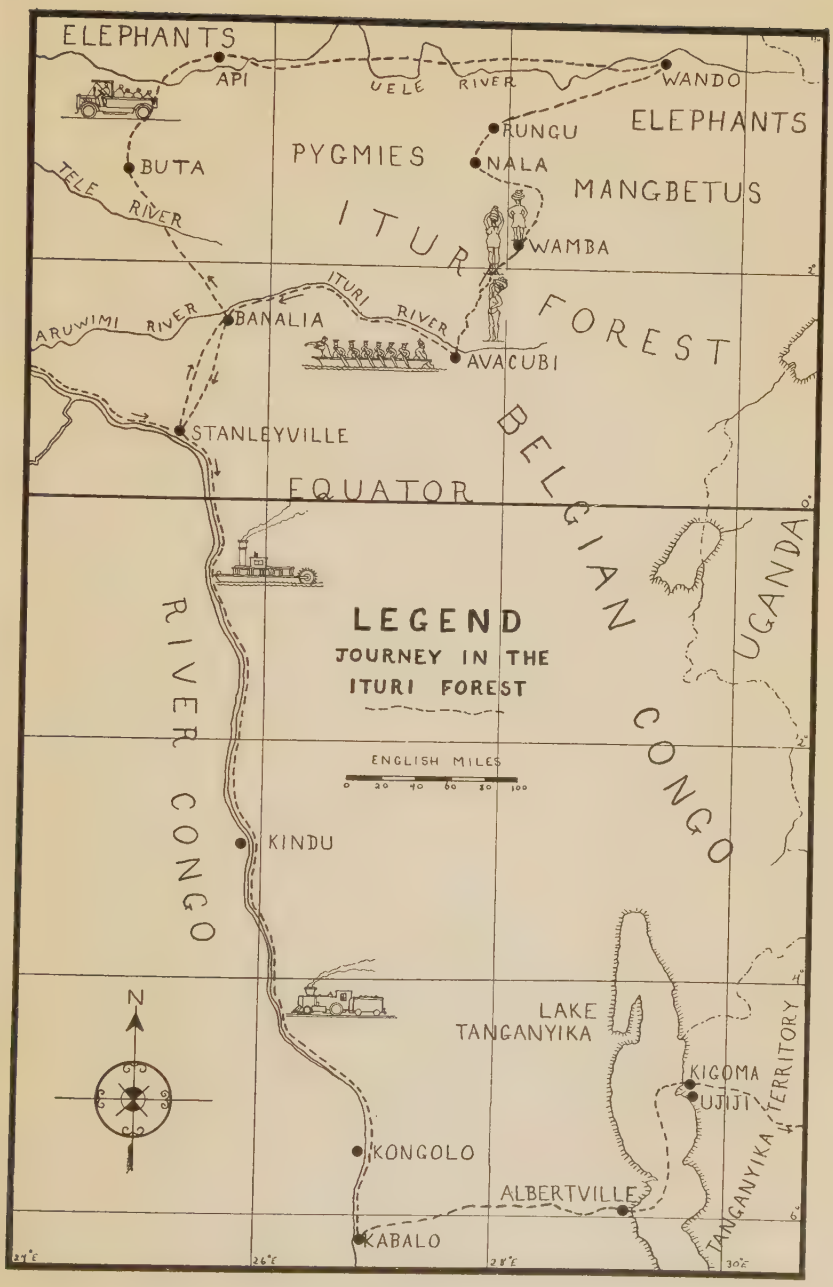
ward the *hors d'œuvres* made their appearance, and at intervals of from twenty minutes to half an hour the remaining courses of the dinner came and went.

It consisted entirely of pork—not good pork, but some cynical imitation of pork—and an occasional waxy and obstinate potato which went on and off with each dish. A young man in evening dress sang tenor solos unaccompanied, the pianist having come down at the last moment, it was announced, with fever.

During one of the all too rare intervals of silence the waiter accidentally stepped on the foot of our Belgian guest's little dog. There was an ear-splitting yelp. The Belgian, incensed almost beyond the power of self-control by the fact that an ignominious native had stepped on the dog of an agronome, exploded into a tornado of infuriated Bangala. Then to us: "I ought to hit him, I ought to hit that fellow. There's no living in this country when they won't let you hit these rascals, these toads. But I'll stare at his feet. That runs them wild. You just try it. Stare at their feet. They can't bear it. It runs them wild." He stopped talking and devoted all his energies to glaring with concentrated derision at the bare feet of the sad waiter, who circled the table, visibly agonized by this singular attack.

Dinner was no sooner over than everybody rushed from the gala scene, we to the river-side to find a pirogue, the other guests to the Greek café where less organized but apparently more genuine gaiety continued till after dawn. The *Kigoma,* where we slept that night, was anchored on the other side of the river.

Although our canoe crept well upstream before venturing across, and in spite of the strong arms and lithe backs of our *pagayeurs,* contending with all their force against the current,


ELEPHANTS
API
UELE RIVER
WANDO
RUNGU
ELEPHANTS
PYGMIES
NALA
BUTA
TELE RIVER
MANGBETUS
ITURI FOREST
WAMBA
ITURI RIVER
ARUWIMI RIVER
BANALIA
AVACUBI
STANLEYVILLE
EQUATOR
BELGIAN CONGO
UGANDA
LEGEND
JOURNEY IN THE ITURI FOREST
ENGLISH MILES
0 20 40 60 80 100
RIVER CONGO
KINDU
N
LAKE TANGANYIKA
KIGOMA
UJIJI
TANGANYIKA TERRITORY
KONGOLO
ALBERTVILLE
KABALO
29°E
26°E
28°E
30°E

NOT TOO FAR FROM THE COUNTRY OF THE MANGBETUS

(*See page* 100)

we landed far below the *Kigoma* on the other side. As we crossed the river we could see the red glare of village fires above Stanleyville, faintly hear above the pounding of the falls the distant shouts and laughter of the dancing natives.

The heavens were dripping molten fire by eight o'clock, when we went ashore to hear Christmas mass at the Cathedral. A passage up steps and through a vestibule crowded with kneeling natives was made for us, and we walked down the aisle between two solid masses of kneeling figures, mostly children, whose soft, brilliant eyes all turned luminously to stare. The air rang with the sound of singing voices. They filled the church like wind—I think there must be very few boy choirs anywhere as beautiful as native choirs in the Congo, and at one side of the chancel you caught a glimpse of the back and waving arm of the monk who led them.

Of the brilliant figures grouped about the altar the most significant was that of a frail-looking old man, dressed in gold-embroidered robes, with his bishop's miter on his head. There were several tall young priests with fine noses and spreading apostolic beards and a dozen minute black acolytes in scarlet robes that trailed on the floor, visibly delighted with the red dresses, the swinging censers, the genuflections they performed with dramatic thoroughness. On these youths the eyes of the young priests were anxiously fixed. Veiled but energetic nods attempted to direct their movements; mustaches and beards parted in fierce whispers when they started down the aisle before his Eminence with the cross hind side before. Candlelight shone on the beautiful ritualistic stuffs; white frangipani flowers poured out their sweetness, a bouquet of northern roses, obviously rare and cherished, faded on the altar—roses the wrong color, livid, forced, as alien, it seemed, as our trans-

planted religion on this continent of sun and lust and death, to put it a bit melodramatically but truly enough. And through it all with barbaric freedom and abandon, with true tone and a kind of living rhythm, the choir boys shouted the soaring music of the mass. . . .

Out in the white sunshine we stopped to talk to Monsieur LeBlanc, an important local official who had formerly been stationed in the Kivu country. LeBlanc has had a long experience in the Congo, a career just brushed, as most careers in the Congo are, by tragedy. A friend once said to him, jokingly, as he supposed, "I'm fed up on all this. If I had a gun I'd shoot myself." "Take mine," LeBlanc said laughingly, pointing to his revolver which lay on the table. The young man took it and promptly blew out his brains.

From LeBlanc we learned that the Governor, to whom we had letters, was away and the Commissaire Général ill with fever, but that he, LeBlanc, would give us any assistance we needed. We made an appointment for the next day and then found an automobile to take us out to the gay white sugar-frosted villa of the great Mr. Steinburg, Stanleyville's self-made millionaire.

Steinburg, a short stocky man with small dark features and close lips, welcomed us hospitably in French and English, two of the twelve languages, European and African, which he is said to speak, all badly. Rumor has it that he has no native tongue. He is called the King of the Blacks, and it is whispered by the envious that he began his fortune trading for ivory with a string of beads in one hand and a rhino-hide whip in the other. But his career in reality seems to have been quite commonplace, founded on nothing more spectacular than sobriety, thrift, and the commercial instinct. His astounding villa is as much a part of his acquisitive and superabundant vitality as

his numerous and successful business enterprises. It is a Turkish cozy corner on a Titanic scale, a French villa and a California bungalow and a summer hotel by Arabia out of Montgomery Ward, with a touch of African jungle. There are carved ebony and pounded brass, there are gilt-framed paintings, fantastic wall papers, violent red hangings, wicker and inlaid and leather furniture, Oriental lamps, elephant tusks and crocodiles of carved ivory and ivory figurines in the native manner with bland, sly, ovoid faces. There are spears and drums and lizard-skin guitars. There is a DuBarry bedroom with furniture in the French manner, made in the Congo. In the numerous ample rooms the wicked ultra-violet sunshine is tempered to a radiant gloom, cool breezes float through high doorways framing the brown-gold Congo, and here and there and everywhere are photographs of two handsome children, back in Europe at school.

We sipped Steinburg syrups and mineral water made at Steinburg factories. We asked Madame Steinburg if she were going to attend the Grand Oriental Cinema that night, which we understood had once belonged to Steinburg.

"Yes, indeed, I'm going, for I have never seen it."

"Not seen it? But it has been here four years."

"Yes, but it has never worked."

"Pardon, my dear. It did work once. But you were in Europe."

There was at first a little trickle of colonial talk. We were told that it was cool! in Stanleyville because it was the dry season; that it was fatal to the health to drink alcohol in the tropics; that it was a very good thing that whites are no longer permitted to strike the natives; that polygamy was a bad thing for the country. At a tea party that afternoon we were told that it was hot in Stanleyville because it was the dry season;

that alcohol was an essential to health in the tropics; that the country was going to the dogs because the whites could not strike the blacks; that polygamy was an excellent thing for the natives.

But most of the time Steinburg wanted to talk about America, about the price of General Motors and the alleged fight with Ford—a topic much discussed in the Congo. The United States is his passion. "If I had gone there when I was a boy I should have been one of your great millionaires. I have a brother in Shee-cah-go and he is a millionaire. It is not the money I regret; I got lots, plenty money. But I would have done big things. There everything is good, your business, your machinery, your people. I know all your great men. I know Lincoln and Roussefelt, Barnum and Vanderbilt, I know all your generals, Washington, Lee, Grant, Pairshing. Ask me questions and you'll see I know. I read your papers, your magazines. One of them came to-day. Where is it, my dear, the new *Saturday Evening Post?*"

Madame smiled her warm, Oriental smile. "Oh, there are such lovely pictures of things to eat in your American magazines. I think you must have very good things to eat when you put their pictures in the papers—colored, too!"

Scared-looking barefoot blacks fled everywhere to look for the paper. Steinburg led the search himself and came back triumphant. He handed the magazine to me. It fell open at the portrait, softly tinted, marvelously graphic, of an orange custard, "made in two minutes—two—from our Hevier Helthpaket."

"Some day I'm going to America," said Steinburg, "and I'll do business too. I'll build a showroom on Broadway all out of elephant tusks. I'll have natives to sing and dance; I'll—" and he went on outlining a plan that would out-publicity all the

high-powered publicity schemes I ever knew, even in America, the fountainhead of it all.

We had thought, coming up the river, that the food on the *Kigoma* was the worst in the world—a curiosity, a rarity, something to be remembered and told about in years to come. But we had not, at that time, tasted the cuisine of the Stanleyville Ritz. And now after a sinister luncheon we took refuge in the bar from the suffocating heat of this Christmas afternoon. From this place we were immediately ejected. Polite but determined, the proprietor explained that it was the hour at which he and his wife took their siesta, a measure necessary to their health and particularly necessary after the fatigues of the gala Christmas Eve. The hotel was closed and locked during this period and we spent two broiling, drowsy hours watching two monkeys we had acquired swinging by their tails in a small tree on the terrace.

When the proprietor's health-giving nap was ended we were informed that one of the apartments reserved for us had been vacated. The apartment turned out to be not an apartment but one room, not a room but a cave, a small square cave with a stone floor, peeling walls, and no windows whatever. In it was one tumbledown iron skeleton of a bed draped with a torn and dirty mosquito net, a tray with a tea pot and some crusts of bread and jam swarming with ants on the floor. Dirty water stood in the washbasin and in the overflowing pail under the basin. Rats and lizards had once had a nest in the mattress and handfuls of chewed, filthy wool flew out when it was turned. Our eyes fell on this picture in the hottest time of the hot, heavy afternoon, and all in all it was one of those moments people have, I suppose, on any journey, when they wonder why on earth they ever came.

Loud preparations were now under way for the Grand Oriental Cinema. As soon as the function which in the Ring Lardner manner might laughingly be referred to as dinner was over, tables were hustled out, a wrinkled sheet hung at one end, doors resolutely draped with black cloths, lights extinguished, and a very old Ford truck backed into the dining-room. It was attached by a wire to a cinema machine presided over by a coal-black Portuguese gentleman and a light-yellow Portuguese child with an egg-shaped face. A small row of Portuguese half-castes occupied some of the chairs. Almost nobody occupied the others, although a few shadowy forms drifted in during the performance, stumbling, as they came, over the prone bodies of a surprising number of stray dogs. Near the door another Portuguese was seated at a table with a pile of tickets marked 10 francs before him. I had not noticed that gentlemen of his type in the Congo were oversensitive about money, but, sitting in front of 10-franc tickets for what was to follow, this individual actually hung his head, and I had to force upon him the price of admission. The other two or three spectators spared him this humiliation.

Then somebody turned on the Ford, and hellish pandemonium broke loose. Deafeningly the engine roared, stiflingly clouds of blue smoke poured into the room. Without any appearance of conviction the Portuguese proprietor of the machine, his child, and a group of friends did things to the camera, and in time, a very long time, the cinema actually began.

What it was all about I cannot with any certainty say. At one time sea waves waved and waved; at another there seemed to be a line of marching soldiers, a monument, old gentlemen in silk hats receiving bouquets—an official ceremony in the Congo, I presume. Without any clear transition, this spectacle merged

into what might be called the feature. Weary-looking actors passed with slow, confused gestures across the screen, all for some unknowable reason seeming to be in the lowest depths of despair. There were a very good young man and a very bad young man. The bad young man, after glancing anxiously into the camera, made what later events indicated to be a licentious advance on a very plain young lady in a shirtwaist. The good young man reluctantly dealt him a languid blow on the chest. The villain fell. The row of Portuguese half-castes cheered. They were friends of the owner. The reel was ended.

Half a dozen people rushed to help wind up the next one. The Ford orchestra played a deafening entr'acte. The drama was resumed. Again and again the young lady was threatened with worse than death, was again and again most unwillingly rescued by the weary hero. Reel followed reel, entr'acte followed entr'acte. The end at last and the title written in French and Flemish told us that simple hearts are the happiest and simple virtues are rewarded in the long, long run.

M. LeBlanc had invited us to go sightseeing the following day, but I was the only one who had sufficient leisure to accept. I asked him to set the time.

"Six o'clock," said M. LeBlanc.

"Isn't that too late?"

"Late!" he exclaimed. "Why, the sun doesn't rise till five-thirty."

We compromised on half-past seven. He arrived at that hour crisply dressed in white, vigorous, active, enthusiastic, driving a Buick: "Your American cars are wonderful. I love them. They are *épatants,* formidable. I wouldn't have anything else. What time do you have to be back?"

I told him I was to see the police commissioner at ten-thirty about a new boy.

"Then," said LeBlanc, "we can take our time." He loosed the brake. The Buick leapt forward. He kept one hand on the Klaxon, the other on the wheel. We tore along the majestically shaded streets of Stanleyville and out into the country, skimming down hills, rattling over plank bridges. Slim naked figures of natives strolling leisurely, spear in hand, dove for cover, chickens scuffled in desperate flight, the needle of the speedometer trembled around sixty.

"Don't look at that," my host roared, following my glance; "it doesn't work."

We resumed our shouted conversation about Africa, the Congo, Belgium's problems here, her achievement in the face of serious difficulties—a modern epic of empire.

"We need American methods out here, American machinery, American enterprise and money." This is a refrain you hear constantly in the Congo—the kindred feeling, as it were, of a young pioneer country for an older one, of a new land setting its feet on that path of development along which we have traveled so fast and so far.

We rushed through a model village being built for workmen of the state, dashed in and out of a rural dispensary and clinic where native male nurses gave out specific remedies and performed certain treatments. We drove up to a deep-thatched stucco school building with overhanging eaves and wide unglazed windows that framed the shimmering jungle. At our entrance the boys rose and burst into a sudden very loud song, led by the native man who teaches them. Then a very little naked boy was called upon to do a very large sum. He took the chalk, and bursting into a kind of chant, added, multiplied, divided, and, when it was all over, verified his results, a small

monkeylike finger traveling back and forth along the lines of figures. Outside, palms and tall elephant grass glistened in the morning light; serene silence lay over the vast, wild scene. Inside, the brown children of the jungle stared with soft eyes at the blackboard, taking the first important step in the march of the new order.

State schools like this have been established in many parts of the Congo. They are conducted by native teachers or, in some of the more important towns, by Marist brothers employed by the state. The pupils are almost always boys. The government is obliged to proceed slowly in overturning native customs, and the emancipation of women plays no part in the old Congolese tradition. When she is ten or twelve or fourteen the girl is sold for a certain number of knives, a goat, a few enamel saucepans, her father or oldest brother receiving the payment. She becomes wife and beast of burden for the man who buys her and as many like her as he can afford. Book-learning would neither add to her salability, nor, probably, to her willingness to fulfill her antique rôle.

Our next stop was at the state farm where scientific agriculture is taught native boys—much, I gathered from LeBlanc, against their will; they can see some point in studies which emancipate them from physical labor, but none whatever in those which merely show them how to keep at it with better results; after that to an experimental farm for what LeBlanc calls *moteur culture*. The government has imported gasoline farm machinery from the United States and is experimenting with its use, establishing practicability, costs, and so forth. The plan is, eventually, to rent these machines to white planters or even to enterprising natives. There are American tractors, cultivators, seeders, corn huskers, I've forgotten what all, and

three or four enthusiastic young Belgian agronomes carrying on the work.

Next back toward Stanleyville to take a look at a carpentry school where the state is training men who come of a race of fine wood-carvers to make hideous machine-cut European furniture. On to an obstetrical clinic and baby welfare station, then to the brand-new and impressive hospital for blacks.

M. LeBlanc and his wife were our hosts for lunch. A kind of tropical bungalow has been evolved in the Congo which is a miracle of coolness and comfort, a deep roof coming down in low eaves on all sides, immense veranda rooms, wide windows without glass, tiled floors, rattan shutters and mats. The chairs are so deep and reclining they are almost sofas, the tables low, native stools. These hospitable rooms are always full of cool breezes and tempered sunshine and an air of repose that is quite special and extremely apropos in this country of broiling sunshine and an atmosphere so heavy that it weighs on you like a burden.

It was a wonder to us to sit again at a private table, a clean table set with lace and silver and glass—lots of glass, tumblers for sherry, for white wine, for claret—once more disproving the theory that colonials don't drink alcohol in the middle of the day. The food, after our recent sufferings, was a miracle—soup that tasted like soup; fish, lamb, vegetables, puddings—M. and Mme. LeBlanc indescribably kind and hospitable, but apparently not sharing our appreciation of so many good things.

"Look at that fish—oh, the savages—look what he has done to it! They are savages, nothing else. Will you kindly observe the roast? What was he thinking of? Savages, savages! The peas—oh, these savages! I ask you, *mon cher,* with such savages—what is one to do?"

Madame's attention was divided between the gastronomic misdemeanors of the savages in the kitchen and the demands of the LeBlanc baby, who had her place at the table.

"He is terrible," M. LeBlanc proudly testified. "He is *épatant*. He is really formidable."

The baby shouted and waved his spoon. He repulsed his bouillon, would have none of his milk. He complained and he stormed. "It is the white wine," his mother explained. "He sees it. He is very *amateur* of white wine." She mixed a little wine with water. The baby swallowed it, smiled a ravished smile. "He is extraordinary," exclaimed M. LeBlanc; "he is formidable."

We talked about Challux' book on the Congo. Half the colonials tell you it is very good, the other half that it is very bad. One delicious dish after another came and went. *"Les sauvages, les sauvages,"* groaned Mme. LeBlanc. The baby fretted, drank his wine, laughed. "He is terrible," said his father proudly. "He is really terrible. . . ."

Good-by to the nice LeBlancs and their formidable baby and their pleasant house. Out into the heat of early afternoon. Down to the Steinburg warehouse where the men were repacking our chop-boxes in a courtyard full of elephant tusks—Steinburg ivory. We were leaving Stanleyville tomorrow.

Chapter 9

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

It had been our intention in the beginning to make simply a moving-picture of primitive native life, particularly of the Mangbetus, and of travel methods in crossing equatorial Africa from the west coast to the east. As we advanced into the country, however, with our most excellent equipment—a professional moving-picture photographer, an Akely camera, an Eyemo, the required assortment of lenses, interesting appliances known as filters and no less than 28,000 feet of virgin film, our ideas enlarged. Why not, while we were about it, make a picture which could be shown professionally?

But opinion, it seemed, was divided as to what kind of picture could be shown professionally with any chance of success. The matter became the subject of endless discussions, developed into a philosophic argument which, like all philosophic arguments, was never resolved. Ethical questions made their appearance, truth with a capital T became an issue, the inner inwardness of hokum was solemnly discussed in the dreamy moonlight of royal villages under the giant mangroves and drooping silver of the palms.

"I tell you there's no use making a straight travel picture. Nobody wants to see native life and Africa as they are. They want to see them as they are not."

So saying, a scenario compiled by the advocates of film melodrama was taken out. Our Mangbetus had become actors in a highly elaborated plot; there were a Pygmy sequence, a cannibal sequence, an elephant sequence. There were shots of ladies approaching cannibal village, close-ups of ladies looking into boiling pot and of human bones boiling in pot, shots of ladies rescuing native about to be buried alive. (The ladies protested, but without avail.) Close-ups of Pygmies about to shoot party with poisoned arrows.

"Oh, come, we can't put over anything like that!"

"Why not? They do have poisoned arrows."

"Yes, but if they were about to shoot us with them it certainly wouldn't be in front of Charlie's camera! You'd have to arrange—"

"Well, how do you suppose most, I might say all, African films are made? Do you suppose the lion when he is really charging does it in just the right light, with the hunter in the proper place to compose the picture and the lady hunter with all her movie makeup on? Or that any human being grinds a camera on the ground when a bull elephant, who is stronger than a locomotive, as fierce as a tiger, and as quick as a greyhound, is charging twenty feet away? Rubbish. These things are staged. They build corrals, they put platforms in trees and there is such a thing as the double exposure."

"Is it all fake?"

"Not all; only when it's necessary, which is usually. What difference does it make, anyhow? Don't you arrange a family group when you take it?"

This sounded reasonable. Stage-setting a lion or elephant hunt, then, merely meant arranging for photographic purposes real possibilities. And if boiling cannibal pots and poisoned arrows were real possibilities, why not stage them too?—

"Then I heard the boom of the blood-lust song . . ." Maybe it was all true. I felt scared.

In Stanleyville the scenario again made its appearance. It called for bull elephant charging ladies of party as they shoot, and a way around the delay and difficulty of photographing a wild elephant engaged in this somewhat unpleasant proceeding was suggested. The theory has always been that, unlike his Indian brother, the much wilder African elephant cannot be tamed. But we had learned that, at a place called Api in the Ituri forest, there is an elephant school where the terrible African elephant has been as thoroughly gentled as a plow-horse.

We, therefore, would go to Api and stage our alleged hunt there. Supposed trackers would lurk through a near-by jungle path, alertly stalking a couple of tame elephants, these to be cut in from time to time with soft music and appropriate art titles: "Roamed the Lords of the Forest, little dreaming that close behind, Nature's greatest killer, Man—" and so forth. Behind the trackers the hunters would be perceived, solera cloth suits and all, brand-new rifles at ready, close-ups of forefingers lightly resting on triggers, ready to fire. I don't seem to remember just how, but I know a rubber spear was also involved. I think there were to be two kills, one performed by a native who would hurl himself on the benevolent Api elephant with a rubber spear, the other to be apparently achieved by the hunters in their best Abercrombie and Fitch manner.

The wind-up of the killing scene, the actual falling of the elephants, could be managed in two ways. Obviously, we should never be allowed to do away with one or two of the expensive post-graduates of the Api college. So later we would try to get a shot of a real elephant falling in a real hunt. Failing this, a tarpaulin was to be stuffed to look like the great

hulk of an elephant seen through the brush. The public, having seen the real, tame elephants so plainly, would readily believe that the tarp was one of the animals they had just beheld. A shot of the falling canvas would be flashed rapidly on the screen just after the hunters had jerked their guns to their shoulders and a puff of white smoke had drifted away from the barrel-end.

With these plans firmly in mind we set out for Api. Fortunately it did not take us too far from the route we should have to follow to reach the Pygmy country and the still more remote domain of the Mangbetus.

Chapter 10

INTO THE ITURI

THE Ituri is a virgin forest. Here and there where native settlements have endured for nobody knows how many centuries, the original growth has been pushed back and second growth or grasslands made their appearance. But for the most part, it is the old, primaeval, towering forest in the shadowy depths of which elephants, rare okapi and bongo, antelope, red buffalo, great oily pythons, and a hundred other descendants of the First Families of the wilderness, live their own lives in the old way; Pygmies still shoot monkeys with tiny reed arrows feathered with leaves, the Mangbetu kings still hold court according to immemorial tradition in the painted houses of their Arabian Nights villages.

In front of the post office in Stanleyville there is an impressive sign. It points several ways, indicating the motor highways finished or under construction through this antediluvian world, and the legend pointing to the road which we were to follow for a short distance thrillingly read, "To the Nile." Its terminus is Redjaf on the White Nile. From there you can go out by Egypt or proceed by steamboat, automobile, and railway clear across Central Africa to Nairobi—across the region returning travelers so love to call the Blue and so often represent as a place practically unknown to white men!

But do not let the fact of motors and motor roads too greatly

A MODEST PYGMY LADY

(*See page* 161)

PYGMIES WITH A NATIVE OF ORDINARY SIZE

(*See page* 154)

affect your point of view. They seem to reduce all countries to the same common denominator, but this is inexact. They don't —at least not when they are as recent as they are in the Congo forests. They do offer conclusive proof that you're not the first white man or woman to penetrate this wild region—thus making it a little more difficult to be impressive about your adventures when you get home.

There are several motor transport companies in the Congo, and stations have been established along these main highways where touring-cars or at least trucks can be hired, gasoline, oil, and tires obtained, and repairs made. It is all very expensive and not always satisfactory, and I think, if one plans to motor extensively in the heart of Africa—which is now quite possible —it is best to take one's own motor car or truck. It is, of course, necessary to carry with you an entire housekeeping-outfit—beds, tables, chairs, dishes, linen, kitchen equipment, and a certain amount of provisions, although canned food can be bought at posts on the motor road. When you leave the highway and travel by porter safari through the depths of the forest, white men's posts are many days apart and only native food can be secured.

Along most of the routes of travel—whether they are motor roads, footpaths, or jungle rivers—the government has established permanent camps at the end of a day's march. These are called *gîtes d'étapes* and are one of the characteristic features of Congo travel. The *gîte* consists of four stucco walls and a thatched roof. There are usually two rooms, one on each side of a kind of veranda which cuts through the center of the house. A narrow porch also runs across the front, deeply shelved with thatch. The floors are of hard-baked earth, and as the rooms are so often without windows, or at least with only a small hole cut in the wall, you cannot see what the dark corners

conceal and can only fear the worst! Back of the *gîte* is a small cook-house—merely a thatched stucco shed, occasionally equipped with a brick brazier. Sometimes there is a shelter where the servants can sleep, but more often they have to find lodgings in native huts.

When you are fortunate enough to be able to hire a touring-car you can very often get a white chauffeur. The trucks are manned by black drivers, often rather able but, from a point of view which includes obsequious manners in employees, insolent and spoiled by the dizzy elevation above their fellow cannibals which the mastering and conducting of such powerful magic as a self-propelling vehicle naturally implies.

Although we left a large part of our luggage in Stanleyville we nevertheless set out with a formidable amount. It was loaded on two one-ton Ford trucks in the last stages of senile decrepitude. We also had two touring-cars in charge of a Portuguese, who drove one of them. As long as he was with us our journey was burdened with this man's hatred of the natives. Stupid, lazy, and inefficient himself, he never stopped inveighing against the stupidity of the blacks. When you see men like this Portuguese you realize, even if there were no other reason, how fortunate it is that the whites are no longer quite free to beat and kick out their own inefficiencies on the natives. He was the kind of man who, when he didn't understand a black, knocked him down.

This man had decreed—and, as it happened, justly—that the trucks must keep in front of us, while the black drivers were equally determined to stay behind. We had, in consequence, unending trouble with the trucks. Every few miles one of them would wheeze to a standstill, two black forms would leisurely dismount—there are always two blacks to each car—their torsos would disappear under the hood of the truck and

remain there indefinitely. "Devils, worthless species of apes," shouted the Portuguese, "they're only doing it because they have to go in front. They want to be behind so that they can amuse themselves in every village as they go through." But he was afraid, for some reason, to use physical violence with these men, perhaps because they were specially valued by the company.

When we changed outfits at a place called Buta, a Belgian took charge of the caravan—a handsome blond giant of a man with an ungovernable temper. Anger, the books say, is more dangerous to you in the tropics than malaria germs, but this otherwise very agreeable person seemed to thrive on it. I remember a long, dusty hill and ahead of us a truck, the black driver of which did not hear our horn. As we drove mile after mile, taking his dust, the white driver became apoplectic, half insane with fury. At last he managed to bring his car alongside the truck. He bellowed at the blacks on the front seat of the latter to stop, and springing from the car, rushed on them. His powerful right arm and doubled fist shot back and forth into the cab of the truck until I wondered how there could be anybody left alive inside.

Our retainers, Gabriel, Ipoka, Sindani, Madjeduka, and Kole, undertook the journey in grumbling, fearful, but also anticipatory mood. What would become of them in the *brousse?* The strange natives would not sell them food, they would starve, they did not know what would become of them. But they mounted in considerable excitement and some pride on the loads of baggage—no small part of which was theirs—their hats tied under their chins, one of them armed with a parasol, all carrying sugar cane to suck and banana-leaf packages of evil-smelling, sour manioc paste to eat.

En route we added three bush boys to our retinue, each of

whom received about a tenth of what we paid the Kinshasa boys and did ten times as much work. One of them, Nimo, was one of the most faithful, intelligent, and lovable persons I ever met. His one fault was that he smoked hemp, a drug brought from Asia by the Arabs. The first of a series of cook's assistants was also acquired just after leaving Stanleyville—a servant officially known as the *m'toto* or boy. This child received the sum of $.30 a month for wages and $.06 a week for food and was a monster of laziness and malice, hard-boiled to the point of genius. He was literally driven from camp several weeks later and replaced by a charming *m'toto* with a long peaked head which had been bound and elongated in the aristocratic Mangbetu manner. And he in turn gave way to an engaging waif whose big toe was literally dropping from his foot as a result of unattended infection. *M'totos* seem to have no home, no friends, no family, no clothes, and no food. They wander about the posts where white men are likely to be, thrusting identification books at you, and clad usually in one pitiful rag which does no more than satisfy the meager demands of modesty. We had a friend who bought one of these boys outright from a chief in the French Congo for six empty bottles—a price, if the acquisition were anything like our first *m'toto,* absurdly high.

Cut like a tunnel through the lofty greenery of the great forest ran the red road, a soft, pinkish-henna red that harmonized most beautifully with the everlasting green. You must go to Africa to learn how beautifully green and red complement each other and how beautifully, too, green sets off the gleaming bronze of naked bodies. Along the road tall men strode swiftly, carrying tall spears, and women with hanging breasts trudged, bent forward under the heavy burden of green

plantains resting on their brown backs. Fur was stuffed through their ears, bits of bone imbedded in lips or nostrils, and as we approached they rushed in a panic into the underbrush, clasping frantically to their bosoms tiny, big-eared dogs —still frightened, as are even some of the men working on the new motor roads, by so strange a phenomenon as a motor. Smoke from village fires hung like a mist among the tree tops and blurred the distant reaches with diaphanous blue. The forest rose like a mountain wall on either side of the trail. Huge trees, bare of branches almost to the top, towered above the lower strata of matted vegetation. You looked up and up, and high above, like foliage on the top of a high hill, was the green roof from which long leafless creepers hung to the ground.

Villages of small round huts with immensely tall peaked roofs of thatch, a straw bonnet on the very top of the peak, were strung along the road. Naked gentlemen reclining in steamer chairs sprang to their feet as we passed to give us a very military salute. Pretty girls in ballet skirts of banana leaves, old hags in little besides charms and fur headdresses, children in nothing at all, with protruding stomachs and enlarged navels, all drew themselves to stiff military attention, snapped their hands to their foreheads, and saluted. They seem to love to do it, Heaven knows why. Elephant tracks plowed the motor road. A native runner raised his slit reed in which a letter was inserted, to see if by chance it were destined for one of the whites in the car.

There are no bridges along these forest highways, and the rivers are crossed on pontoon ferries—platforms built crosswise on half a dozen huge dugout canoes. The paddlers stand, several in each canoe, robust, audacious-looking fellows with a kind of hardy devilment about them, peculiar, it seems, to the

whole caste of forest boatmen. Their faces and bodies were more amazingly gashed and patterned than any we had seen. How it must have hurt, how the blood must have run down, when as boys or youths entering manhood they were taken to some secret jungle far from the prying eyes of the whites and these hundreds of cuts were so neatly made! Their hair was twisted into two diabolic horns, one over each eye, their teeth filed, or, to be exact, not filed, but chipped to points as sharp as needles.

The pontoon slips out into the river, the men plunge their sharp paddles in unison, and their wild, sharply rhythmic song breaks out. It is in canon form, all singing the same theme but beginning it at different times; thus some are singing the first phrase while others sing the second and still others the third, and every one of them with the voice of a Roland Hayes! Over this magnificent choral background runs a weird pattern of improvisation, a kind of talking song carried on independently in a high voice by one or the other. It tells listeners on shore who we are, how many of us, what baggage, what guns —a custom as old as the race. When the story is of sufficient importance, signal drums take it up and it is relayed from village to village until, almost simultaneously, the whole forest knows.

When the singers want to be understood they use one of the mongrel commercial languages which have developed in Africa —a "pidgin" form of Bangala in the west and of Ki-Swahili in the east—and they sing about what fine people we are and what a magnificent tip we are sure to give them. But when they are singing their own songs they use their tribal tongue and particularly archaic forms of it, forms which even old colonials can never master.

The first day's journey prolonged itself until after dark. We

drew up at last before what looked in the dim starlight like a pleasant white bungalow with a wide veranda and overhanging roof of thatch. The trucks had to be completely unloaded as it would not be safe to leave anything on them during the night. From nowhere (as this was a government post) a gang of prisoners materialized, softly clinking their chains as two by two they shouldered tin trunks, chop-boxes, and all the rest and carried it up to the bungalow. We got some lanterns lighted and with these and our searchlights examined the empty rooms. We saw a scorpion or what we thought was one, black spiders, and fantastically big cockroaches, and had a finicky feeling of distaste and repulsion for this first *gîte d'étape,* which three months later was to seem to us a dream of luxury.

The boys were shown how to set up the beds, adjust the frames, and hang the mosquito nets on them. Nobody would sleep in the supposedly dirty rooms; so the cots were strung along different sides of the veranda. Prisoners brought wood and water, and we opened some tins of food. The collapsible canvas bathtubs were experimented with, and after endless delays and difficulties a little warm water was secured. In all my life no baths anywhere have felt so luxurious as the cupful of gritty water in a square of canvas resting on a hard floor which we called a bath in the Congo. Cold mists stole out of the jungle, blurring the lighted lanterns placed along the veranda to keep the leopards away, and the bedclothes were soon heavy with moisture.

All night we heard dry rustlings and the scratchings of little bloodless feet, and bits of thatch and skeleton insects drifted down on top of the mosquito nets. In all the forest *gîtes* you hear the dry scratching of these bloodless feet, and it makes you think somehow of death. Indeed all Africa, so fecund, so

careless of life, makes you think of death. Whole peoples have died there so utterly, leaving no words, no monuments, nothing to make them live as other peoples do! During all that night a signal drum near by sent out staccato messages, broken by intervals of silence when, from far away, the faint staccato answer could be heard like an echo, scarcely breathed across the dark spaces of night and jungle.

At dawn a bugle sounded from the post and the drum beat a morning signal for work, entirely different from the searching, far-traveling notes sent out during the night. The boys moved like ghosts through the white fog between house and kitchen, and Sindani's worried face could be seen bent anxiously over the sugar, picking out the ants.

That afternoon we reached the forest *gîte* by the river Télé, too early, we thought, to stop, and, although the Portuguese and the black chauffeurs protested angrily, we went on. There was an endless wait at the river while the truck of a young Belgian official was got across. This young man, smartly buttoned into the best-fitting uniform we saw in the Congo, had very pink cheeks, a small curly mustache, and looked as much like a rosy, gentlemanly boy-doll as anything that was not a doll possibly could look; and he was accompanied by his *ménagère,* an extremely black, heavily gashed and tattooed young lady with razor-edge teeth, who was most incongruously dressed in a tailored suit and white cotton stockings.

Two of the party went ahead with the tents, promising to have them set up in a good camping-place before our arrival. The red sun was setting angrily behind a steaming forest when we reached the village they had selected. We found the wide, well-swept open square literally paved with olive-green canvas, shiny yellow poles, and coils of rope, and two sweating and distracted white men bent over it grimly, baffled but not

beaten, ineffectually assisted by most of the village. The chief—not a very important chief—was young and rather handsome and was simply dressed in a striped undershirt. He had his steamer chair placed for me, and stationing himself beside it with several of his court—a Congo chief is never unattended for an instant—began to think up things to ask for. He wanted the guns; he saw a thermos bottle opened and, to his astonishment, steam come out of it, and he wanted that. He wanted my wedding-ring, wrist-watch, and helmet. Passionately he desired whiskey or any equivalent we might have.

With the slightest movement of his hand he sent slaves flying in every direction. They brought a letter he had received six years before from a Belgian official. He proudly pointed to his name on the envelope and made me read what was inside, his lips moving as I spoke the French words. They brought out an old silver watch and he indicated that it did not function and that he wanted me to fix it. I wished my chair moved, but naturally a chief could not do that. A nod of his head brought men who bowed low and reverently lifted the chair.

It was breathlessly hot. High up in the pink sky was the ghost of a moon and one white star. Crickets thickened the air with their shrilling, and the forest crowded close. Elephants, we knew, and forest buffalo were near, and yellow leopards waited for night to stalk their prey. The far-off chatter of monkeys died away as did the twilight commotion of the birds. A look of quiet waiting stole upon the face of the ancient forest. Little fires gleamed before the high-peaked, fairy-tale houses, and long after we went to bed the village remained awake—soft voices and soft laughter blending into a continuous stream of human sound, a singularly well-bred sound like the talk in a decorous drawing-room at home.

The sun, next morning, was a gold blur in the white mist,

the forest and village ghostly, everything dripping with wet. Naked women passed slowly with jars of water and firewood on their heads or swept the dirt in front of their huts.

Generally speaking, a chief's village is exclusively his own. No other man can live there except the chief's courtiers, attendants, and slaves. The rest of the resident population consists of his extremely numerous wives, each of whom as a rule has a house to herself, and of his mother, sisters, and elderly female relatives. In this village, as is usually the case, the women's quarters lay hidden away behind the public square, and from that direction we heard a sound of singing, of rattles and the slapping of hands. The wives, all young and beautifully formed and dressed in their morning attire—a narrow strip of banana leaf between the thighs—were dancing about their fires. Alice and I joined the circle, trying to do their curious, shuffling steps. The ladies were boundlessly amused and excited. More and more of them joined the dance, endlessly they repeated the hypnotically monotonous steps. The chanting grew loud, the slapping of hands automatic, the dry whisper of the rattles, the jazz beat and uproar of the thing, became ecstatic. All moved together without effort, held as it were in a close tempo that made it easier to continue than to stop. You could easily understand how this mood could develop into that frenzy in which they go on dancing hour after hour, days even, self-hypnotized, lost in some inconceivable rhythmic oblivion.

Not often but a few times, in native villages in the Congo, I felt reluctant to go away. Curiosity, laziness, the stirring, perhaps, of some primitive memory deeply buried in all of us—whatever it was, it amounted to witchery, urging you to remain with these naked, gay, and vital people, in that strange

world of emotions which seemed to glow like shafts of sunlight shining through clear water.

But the time had come to leave. Wood- and water-carriers were paid, a present of money was given to the chief. He tossed it haughtily to a minister—but kept his eye thereafter sharply trained on that person. And to us were presented by our hosts four live chickens and a basket of eggs—all bad.

Motor cars in the Ituri are still so incongruous that you yourself begin to feel differently toward them; you feel as if you were riding in vehicles as magical as any glass chariot or pumpkin coach. At river crossings crowds gathered, naked children danced and screamed before the image of themselves reflected in the shining enamel of the touring-car. When we reached a *gîte* the villagers surrounded the veranda to stare at us, at our belongings, at our boys putting up the beds and folding-table and laying it for supper. All wanted empty bottles, empty tins, or brought monkeys and anteaters to sell. Four young men came up, tonight, on to the porch: "Ask them what they want." "We have come," was the simple reply, "to look at the whites."

When we drove away from a village a mass of laughing, all but naked, shrieking women, holding naked babies with lambent rolling eyes astride their hips, ran after us, howling with excitement. At one place the truck caught fire. Chop-boxes, trunks, and precious film-boxes were hastily dumped on to the road—a road so newly cut that the stumps of bananas and palms, of great mahogany and mangrove trees and wild figs, still bled by the wayside. Out of the matted jungle which had seemed so silent, so utterly devoid of any but its own violent and mysterious vegetable life, there suddenly poured forth a horde of ladies wearing only a green leaf plucked that

morning from a convenient ready-to-wear bush, women who were too afraid of us to approach and take the coveted, glittering safety pins with which we attempted to entice them and which they as a rule love to hang through the holes in their noses or ears.

At times, as you proceed day after day through this dim, living cathedral, a vague uneasiness besets you. The air under the canopy of leaves is not often hot, but it is moist and heavy. It is like the air in a crypt, in one of those other cathedrals built of stone where foolish kings sleep their centuries-old sleep and witch-eyed old women grow littler and littler sitting on stools in yellow candlelight, selling things, one doesn't know what, guarding one doesn't know what—secret and bitter enemies, it seems, of the light, of the soaring Gothic beauty about them, even of yourself.

There was no enmity, secret or otherwise, in the forest, and yet as I have said, a kind of sadness often assailed you—unaccountable sadness, I was about to say, but it was not always unaccountable. Sometimes the cause was an individual—a pitiful alien who could not adapt himself to life in that steamy twilight, and who, caught between those crowding, watchful forest walls, suffered. There was, for instance, the young priest at T.

It was just sunset when we reached T. and the approach of night was like a threat. The river was blood-red, the forest smudged with indigo, the air lifeless and oppressive. Parrots and strange-looking Congo-Persian children swarmed about the trading-post of a Persian merchant and dealer in ivory, fabled to be immensely rich; a very intelligent, sick-looking chimpanzee was tied in front. At a table set out by the roadside, three sweating Belgians and a slight, heavily bearded young priest in a white robe drank bottled eggnog.

Later the priest joined us for dinner. He was a Dutchman, nervous, shaken with overdoses of quinine, sleeplessness, headache. He was sick and he was heartbroken. He had come to the Congo from England, which he loved, where he despairingly longed to be. He was afraid of the dark forest world, of leopards which he fancied might attack him at night, of the disease, the heat, the dark minds of the chiefs living in power surrounded by their vast harems. He had seen, or fancied he had seen, bodies of blacks broken with beatings, and he whispered of the passing of a certain white official whom the natives called "the Leopard" because of the torn and bleeding men left, he said, in the *brousse* when the Leopard's judgments had been accomplished.

The young priest longed pitifully for home. He longed to see his sisters and above all his mother, whom he called his Mammie. Next morning, when, in leaving, we passed his mission, he rushed out and made us go in. He wanted to show us his carved ivory—this piece for one sister, that for another, the finest of all for his Mammie. "I am a new man for your kindness last night. Perhaps you will come back this way? Surely you will—and I may speak English once more! You will not come? No? But take this piece of ivory to think of me."

"We shall think of you anyway, Father."

"But you will not come back! Ah, well . . ."

At any rate, whether from the heavy air or the occasional lonely white men we found there, the forest, as I say, was vaguely depressing. And when the road suddenly left it and emerged into a vast sun-scorched world of tawny veldt and mauve-blue distances, the relief was so great that hysterical gaiety beset us. We talked excitedly for at least half an hour of abandoning our itinerary and all our goods left in Stanleyville and of motoring on and on through this immensity of

rolling plains and dreamy horizons across the Congo toward the Soudan and the remote headwaters of the White Nile. Profound peace and at the same time a sense of adventure breathed from that great sweep of quiet, savage country. There was not a sign of human or even of animal life, only tall, waving yellow grasses high as a man, thorny brush, and twisted pink-flowering trees. Here was Africa as one had dreamed of it—an Africa that had withstood history, remained, it seemed, unmarked by the tide of human effort.

Why, from a sunlit wilderness that made so little of the human heart, should so vast a serenity have emanated and plunged like a shaft of light down, down, into the very depths of ours? And either because it is comforting to dilate on projects one has not the faintest idea of carrying out, or because of the peace drawn from that wide, bright land, we were so cheered that when our travels took us back into the breathless forest we were quite content to feel its dimness and mystery close in about us once more.

Chapter 11

VISITORS

Huge white butterflies exquisitely patterned with brown—blue, gray, and silver butterflies—fluttered about me in clouds, settled on my hands, my knees, my typewriter. Never had butterflies made so free with my person before. In a near-by village drums beat; the monotonous chant of the dance rose and fell. Each drum thumped out its own rhythm, but all blended into a complicated jazz pattern which suddenly ended on an unexpected rising note. The jungle became startlingly quiet. Invisible flying things stung every exposed portion of my flesh, and although I sat quite still, sweat poured and poured from me. All around, in every direction, flowed dark, shining rivers of ants, which I was extremely careful not to disturb.

We were in camp outside of Buta, one of several places each of which is said to be the hottest in the Congo. We had reached there the day before. It had been high noon when the forest opened, revealing a quiet, gleaming river and, clinging to the opposite hillside, the small settlement of Buta. No ferry or ferryman was in sight. Forest, river, and valley slept a trancelike sleep under the terrible midday sun. The only living things we saw were a crocodile that slipped off a spit of land into the water and two huge dark birds that flapped lazily from one shore to the other, uttering a harsh, mournful cry,

intended, it seemed, to be heard a long way off. Then a dugout canoe slid around the forested bend of the river, paddled by a naked woman and an old man. The paddles made no sound and scarcely a ripple as they dipped into the glassy water, and the paddlers seemed to want to make themselves invisible as well as noiseless—to succeed by some miracle in getting by us unperceived. But with shouted threats and bribes the driver induced them to carry us across. We sat down under the vast shade trees of Buta's hot green square to eat a picnic lunch, but were soon driven by ants back into the sunlight.

Then, providentially, a white man appeared, a genial, stoutish middle-aged person in khaki and suspenders, with the usual shaved head and tropical pallor. He surveyed us with small kindly eyes that fairly glistened with curiosity and invited us into his house to wait until car and truck could be ferried across the river.

It was the usual thatched bungalow with furnishings brought from Belgium—chenille and lace incongruously suggestive of a Flemish parlor in some ancient gray village under gray, rain-dimmed skies. His wife was there and his daughter, a startlingly beautiful girl of sixteen.

"Doesn't your daughter," we asked, "get a little lonely in Buta?"

"Oh, no, Madame."

"What does she find to do?"

"She embroiders."

The girl raised her long-lashed blue eyes to her mother and then turned them away toward the empty sun-baked street and across the empty sun-baked square.

"And so," Madame added, "she is quite content."

WOODS FULL OF ANIMALS ALL TALLER THAN THE TREES

(*See page* 281)

A CHIEF'S WIVES SMOKING A BANANA-STEM PIPE

(*See page* 195)

We were obliged to remain at Buta ten days, waiting for a new motor outfit to take us on to Api, and, not yet travel-wise, had elected to pitch our tents instead of setting up housekeeping in the *gîte d'étape*. Worse yet, misguided by a yearning for the picturesque, we had camped in a narrow, palm-shaded ravine effectually shut away from any breath of air which might have been stirring. Finding it impossible to sit under canvas in that temperature, I had had an opening cleared and my chair placed under the trees among the extravagantly numerous and sleepy butterflies.

It was afternoon of the day before New Year's. My boy Kole passed, melancholy, gnawing sugar cane and followed by a servant of his own, carrying his trunk—our boys were plutocrats in the *brousse*. In a few moments he returned bringing me a dead chicken as a New Year's gift and demanding to know what I was going to give him. Then came the cook dressed in the costume he had adopted for work, a torn pink undershirt and a knitted cap of red and green wool with a tassel on top. He too asked for New Year's money and a *m'toto* (we had not yet secured one) to carry wood and water for him. Then Madjeduka, who, with better sense than we had shown, had moved into the cool thatched *gîte* with not one but two wives recently acquired and potted plants along the veranda rail. He too wanted a present, although just the night before he had earned the princely sum of 50 francs for walking 10 miles in the dark to retrieve a pair of motor glasses which were lost.

Incidentally, these people have the most uncanny gift for finding things. Once in East Africa, when these glasses were again lost, we sent a languid, sore-eyed fellow into the trackless veldt where we had been chasing wildebeestes, and without any hesitation he walked straight to the seemingly unidenti-

fiable spot where they had fallen and picked them up. But this bloodhound quality has the inconvenience of making it almost impossible to throw anything away. No matter how cunningly you attempt to leave something behind in the bush a breathless runner overtakes you with whatever the discarded article was and proudly demands a *matabiche*. I tried for weeks to get rid of a pajama belt and was just about to sail away triumphantly without it across Tanganyika Lake when a boy rushed across the dock and dashed on board with the belt!

There is a small white population at Buta, and now, on this drowsy afternoon, visitors made their appearance—three pale gentlemen with shaved heads, accompanied by their wives. They talked thirstily—the men, that is, the women being dutiful listeners—like people who had not talked enough for a long time. And as they talked their eyes were never still, but roamed curiously—looking, peering, sizing up equipment, baggage, everything. They wanted us to go monkey-shooting with them. "But," we protested, "we wouldn't shoot monkeys for anything."

Or hippopotamuses—there was a man they were determined we should stop and see: "He is a regular buoyee scoot. He kills hippos all the time. He can't see a hippo without shooting him down. Boom. Pouf. Down they go. He is a regular buoyee scoot."

But why shoot a hippo? So defenseless, prowling the river bottoms. No, we wouldn't do that.

"But you have guns? You are hunters? Yes? No? Are you not? What then?" Curiosity, suspicion, interest, loneliness. Just why were we here? What were we up to? It was late, and I, to whom the job of talking to them was turned over, was nearly dead.

Compared to later experiences, however, the visitation that

afternoon was mild. Everywhere we met lonely colonials with that passion for talking, for telling stories, especially hunting stories, and we heard many singular tales! Sometimes it was a young official marooned in a remote outpost, or an agricultural agent, or a storekeeper, or a priest. Often they came in pairs, at which times they addressed their reminiscences to each other, although the importance of having us—new people—as audience was quite evident. One had killed an elephant, another a buffalo or a rhino; one had been charged, another ambushed; another had shot a leopard with a strange arm known as a *parabolla.* Of these amazing conversations I especially remember one at a post to which we had returned from a porter safari through the forest. We were no sooner installed in the *gîte* than two youngish middle-aged gentlemen, pale, plump, peak-nosed, in shirt sleeves and ill-fitting khaki, settled themselves with a look of ominous permanency upon the veranda.

"Bon soir, Messieurs et 'dames. You are hunters? You are photographing? *Le cinéma? Tiens, tiens!"* But they didn't want to listen to us; they wanted, like all the other white men we saw in these remote outposts, to talk themselves. They talked about Congo problems and the supposed rivalry between General Motors and Ford, and the ticks they had in their feet—one of them said he had hundreds, which his boy removed, a few at a time, every night. But mostly they talked about hunting:

"You recollect that time I was caught in the *brousse* at M'Goubou? It was *épatant.* There were at least twenty buffalo, and one of them was the biggest bull I ever saw. I said to myself, 'I will get him.' I aim, I shoot, I miss. He charges. Just in time I see an ant hill and climb on top of it. But what does that buffalo bull do? He gets on top of another ant hill. I shoot. Boum, poof. I miss. He runs down and charges, intend-

ing to mount on my ant hill and get me. I shoot again, I shoot four times, six times, but he does not fall till he reaches the very foot of my ant hill. It was *épatant."*

The other gentleman remembers a foray he had with a hippo down on the Nepoko River. It was formidable. Only a miracle saved the canoe and its occupants.

Number One comes back with a startling reminiscence. He had been traveling down the Nepoko by canoe but had left the river and walked inland a matter of 12 kilometers (about 8 miles). Suddenly his boy said, "Master, behold the tracks of a lion." The Belgian glanced about, and what did he see? Not a lion but a crocodile (whose spoor, he assured us, resembled that of a lion), and it was on top of an ant hill! The croc had followed him, had stalked him overland for 12 kilometers! The gentleman had left his gun lying near the ant hill; so he was unarmed, and the crocodile would surely charge him. "Run in a circle, master," cries the boy; "run in a circle!"—a maneuver of which apparently the crocodile was incapable. He runs in a circle. The intrepid boy manages to secure the rifle and shoot the croc. His life is saved. But the whole thing was *épatant,* astonishing. We agreed with him—it was!

We listened and they talked. Evening came and night. They accepted an invitation to dine, or rather, not waiting for one, moved dreamily to the table, floating, as it were, on the tides of their eloquence. Dinner was over, and still they stayed and still they talked. Inky blackness crept out of the jungle and swallowed the small village. Away off in the forest drums rolled, fragments of wild song were blown toward us. Our *gîte,* dimly lighted with oil lanterns and filled with our own goods freshly brought from beyond the seas, was like a ship anchored in some strange dark harbor. I wondered if they felt that too, those young men, and clung to it, telling their preposterous

tales about crocodiles (in which they believed) to postpone the moment when they would have to break the thin link with home we represented?

At Buta we met Americans—rarest of all rare encounters in this part of the Congo. Three of them were members of a scientific mission sent out by an American university to measure Bantu skulls and test the blood of Pygmies. These young men we invited, not without misgivings as to the dinner, to dine. Sindani spent the entire day glumly picking and dissecting four small chickens and making bread. After boiling for hours over a wood fire that went out and had to be entirely rebuilt every fifteen minutes, the chickens turned into puncture-proof rubber with the nasty concentrated chicken taste characteristic of all fowls put on to cook before they have decently breathed their last. The bread was begun by a cryptic muttering from Sindani which was finally translated into a request for 2 francs with which to buy palm wine. Every time we ate bread in the Congo, Sindani procured 2 francs, the boys drank a gallon of palm wine, and a cupful was used in place of yeast to raise the bread.

Gabriel said it was Kole's turn to wait on the table, Kole said it was Ipoka's, Ipoka said it was Gabriel's. They pouted and fought in the darkness beyond the camp fire, refusing to do anything until Blair and Charlie charged in among them, aiming kicks in the direction of rapidly vanishing rears. Whereupon they became the most polished of footmen and handed dishes about with extreme celerity. At last, late that night, exhausted and shivering with the cold dankness that creeps out of the forest after sunset, we sat down to dine with our guests under the dining-room fly.

One of these visitors, a young man who had grown an im-

mense, curly beard and was a most charming and cultivated person, I particularly remember because he had the curious habit of eating ants—ate them, in fact, before coming to Africa, where, of course, grilled ants are a favorite native dish. American ants, he assured us, were much the best, and he said that he only ate the African varieties in order to test their relative merits. Also, this young man was very scornful of the so-called dangers of the tropics—scoffed at sun helmets, quinine, boiled water, and even at elephants, which, although armed with a very light gun, he was planning to shoot. We wondered how long he would beat a game that has never been beaten, and many months later we learned. He had had malaria, had been wounded by an elephant, his wounds had become infected, he had contracted a parasitical disease of the intestines. Then all news of him had failed, and his father had sailed to Africa to look for him.

Our first African dinner guests had departed, lanterns had been set at the tent flaps, the camp slept. It was the parrots who gave the warning. Their frenzied squawking brought us out just in time. The floor of the forest had become a moving floor; rivers and rivers of marching ants converged from every direction and in a very little while would have overwhelmed the camp. Already they were unmercifully stinging our parrots, and what they would have done to us, sleeping in our beds, I hate to think! We grabbed firebrands, brooms, hot ashes. Boiling water was prepared. We worked for hours. Dead ants were piled in such great heaps that they putrefied and so poisoned the air that they had to be buried! This, or rather these, are probably one of the reasons why the jungle is cleared away from about native villages and rest-houses. The ground is always swept as clean as a ballroom floor so that there can be nothing to attract these ant armies.

By the time the ants were vanquished it was morning, and before anybody could get much sleep a truck arrived to take us into Buta. As we had been traveling through a sleeping-sickness region we were not permitted to pass into another district without permits to certify that neither we nor our servants had contracted the disease. The boys, having bought new clothes for the occasion, were a rainbow of color. There were green trousers and orange shirts, purple socks, red handkerchiefs, incredible neckties, and yellow shoes, all several sizes too small. Gabriel's starched collar pushed his face over backward. An agreeable doctor, in a great hurry to go to a sick woman two days' journey from Buta, felt the glands of our necks and testified that we did not have sleeping-sickness—as yet. The boys were examined at the native hospital, and driving home, we picked them up one by one, trudging wearily, shoes in hands, starched collars off, loaded with various repulsive-smelling foods.

At Buta we made the acquaintance of a most engaging infant okapi, the only authentic specimen, I believe, in captivity. Having heard that there was such an animal at the Pré Montré mission, we went in to photograph him, the idea being to insinuate him into our film drama in such a manner that he would seem to be roaming at large in his native jungle. With this end in view we persuaded the kind fathers to let him off his leash, but we had a hard time keeping wire fences, bits of motor road, or the mission from obtruding into the background and ruining all.

The okapi, said to be a species of forest giraffe, was not discovered until 1902, and it was eight years later before the first one was shot (horrid thought) by a white man. The beautiful color of these creatures eludes description—a rich purplish brown with overtones of gold is the nearest I can come to it;

they have pale tannish stomachs and light stripes around the legs and thighs. This one was the size of a colt. He had a long neck, high forequarters, great ears, the beginnings of tiny horns, and soft, gazelle-like eyes. And he had a strange passion for chins. He could not be dissuaded from following you about, his slender nose thrust forward, reaching for your chin, which he took very gently between his teeth and investigated with a very rough little tongue. A most beautiful, affectionate, and fearless creature.

While we were sitting on the cool veranda of the mission a trim and businesslike truck swept up the drive and a tall, casual, blue-eyed individual, a most efficient-looking and American-looking American, descended from it. With him was a priest, Father Duffy, and together they had motored across the (so-called) Blue from Nairobi on excellent roads, often at a rate between two and three hundred miles a day! What was far more surprising to us, they were not accompanied by native servants! A sacred superstition gone smash—it is possible to travel in Africa without a buoyee! "I did start out with some," Mr. King observed, "but I got tired waiting on 'em and sent 'em home."

At this point two large elephants, pupils of the Api school, their great ears flopping, a black boy perched on the shoulders of each, came swinging along, pulling a cart as gently as a pair of oxen.

"Climb up, Father, while I take your picture," Mr. King breezily commanded. The elephant knelt; one of the bearded, sun-helmeted, white-robed mission fathers climbed up with a large cigar in his mouth, and Mr. King snapped him in his businesslike way. Then he boarded his shiny International, all neatly equipped for touring, and with Father Duffy beside him, departed in a cloud of dust for Stanleyville. He expected

to make it that day! Months later we learned that he and his truck blazed a trail across West Africa to British Nigeria, and that after that the gallant machine carried two Englishmen alone across the desert of Sahara to the Mediterranean!

Chapter 12

TAME ELEPHANTS FOR WILD

I HAD expected, of a farm for training wild elephants, something quite different. Not this trim, gay, beflowered little place, like a buttonhole bouquet stuck in the lapel of the wilderness—something between a small military outpost, a village, and a country estate. There were tall trees, blooming hedges, a few comfortable-looking bungalows, a prim row of lovely round native huts with tall roofs, the elephant coral, and no elephants anywhere to be seen. A broad red road passed through the village, and a lazy river gleamed alongside.

Instead of all this finish and flowery tidiness, I had pictured a raw clearing in the midst of great woods, with stumps and fallen trees and plank buildings hastily thrown together—a memory, perhaps, of a lumber camp at home. But I had forgotten bureaucracy and that Api is a government institution and also that it is, as things go in the Congo, relatively old. It was, in fact, King Leopold himself who started Api some thirty years ago. In India elephants ably did their share of the work of empire, and I suppose he saw no reason why the Belgian cause should not be served the same way in the Congo. So he began by importing a few tame Indian elephants, and when that experiment proved, as it soon did, a failure, he decided that the impossible should be made possible and the

untamable African elephant be tamed. Two young elephant hunters, Magnette and a man called LaPlume, were persuaded to undertake the job, and the famous elephant school of Api came into being.

We sat on the steps of the clean, empty visitors' house waiting for the truck and thanking Heaven that this wasn't Buta. There was actually a breeze and, although it was hot, a certain lightness in the air. A low forest crowded to the river's edge on the other side, tsetse-infested and famous in the past for sleeping-sickness epidemics. While we waited a boy with inquisitive rolling eyes arrived with a leg of what amazingly was lamb—lamb in the Ituri is rarer than tsetse flies in New York—sent by M. Magnette. After that a boy arrived with strange inviting fruits that nobody knew how to eat, from M. Magnette, then with wicker armchairs, then with a beautiful pheasant, just shot. Then arrived M. Magnette himself.

No longer young, a little tired, courteous and kindly was the pioneer of Api, and he spent several hours with us, talking about the occupation to which his entire life has been devoted. He adores any and all elephants and discussed his huge pupils in so precisely the manner of a benevolent professor discussing his finishing-school for girls, that the impression, while odd, was extremely engaging. And as he explained the methods used in the extremely finicky business of taming the African elephant, certain doubts began to grow within us as to the successful outcome of our quest.

The hour-to-hour routine, it seemed, was as inviolate as a sacred rite. Nor must there ever be the slightest noise or commotion about camp to excite the young captives. All the serene quiet which is supposed to preside over a sanitarium for nervous millionaires is religiously preserved at an elephant school. There is one way and one way only, Magnette ex-

plained, to subdue the African elephant to the will of man, and that is by absolute and unremitting kindness. By no other method can he be broken. No trainer is allowed to strike, tease, or in any way annoy an elephant. If it is discovered that he has done so, he is severely punished and the elephant himself eventually takes his own revenge. Elephants will, Magnette said, forgive a reprimand if they know they deserved it, but, like the native, they never forgive or forget an unmerited punishment. Several men have been killed at Api intentionally by elephants, but as there was always proof that it was the fault of the man, the elephant was not punished, nor did he ever kill any other person. "Thank Heaven," Magnette piously ejaculated, "there is one animal man can't abuse!"

The elephants' day, we learned, is very orderly. They are called at five-thirty and taken to the river to bathe. Then the older ones go to work, and the young ones do whatever lessons they have to learn. At eleven all knock off and go into the thick brush to eat and escape the heat. The Congo elephant, like the Congo man, is a forest animal and does not easily endure the blazing midday hours. They know perfectly when this time comes, and all set up a special cry to notify their guardians. At five they come home, carrying their fodder and bedding on their backs. Once more they go to the river to bathe. After that, supper, when the baby elephants are stroked and sung to and the end of a perfect day is over.

When the young hunters Magnette and LaPlume undertook King Leopold's business of capturing and taming elephants they had very little idea how to go about either. For many years they muddled along with homemade methods of training and at last imported seven East Indian mahouts to teach them the time-honored ways. The experiment was and was not a success. The Indians spoke nothing but Indian dialects

and the Belgians spoke nothing but French or Congolese, and there was no interpreter; they used severer methods than Magnette would tolerate or than would be successful with the African elephant—even killing one or two young ones in process of training. After seven months of conflict and chaos the mahouts departed by mutual consent.

But the experiment had nevertheless certain valuable results. The Indians knew the best and easiest ways of teaching elephants, and a definite technique of training was established. Many of the present words of command are a curious mixture of Indian and African, and the plaintive songs sung to soothe the elephants are from the East.

Each little pupil has two trainers or *cornacs* of his own and an older elephant chaperon. At first, he does nothing but remain tied to a stake or walk slowly around, hobbled to the leg of the big elephant. Morning and evening his *cornac* sings a soft Hindu chant, brushing him with palms or pulling a rope back and forth across his back—a massage he very much enjoys —and he is given titbits of pineapple, sweet potato, or manioc. Then after a few months his training begins. This early training is designed simply to accustom the elephants to human beings, to gain their confidence and friendship, and to teach them to obey words of command—to kneel, rise, pick up things, turn, stop.

A long interval, preferably ten years, passes between this first schooling and special training for work. An animal which lives probably two hundred years takes a long time to grow up, and it is considered bad for them to work until they are more or less mature.

All the natives employed in the capture and training of elephants are Azandehs. These were formerly one of the greatest warrior and hunting tribes of West Africa. They hunted ele-

phants with spears on foot, two men running beside the quarry, one thrusting from one side, one from the other. Now it is always Azandehs who make the captures, and it is such delicate work that they do not wish white men to be with them. Advice, or even watching, they maintain, would throw them off. Every year one or two are killed, but there are always, Magnette said, a hundred more clamoring for the job.

In January, when the grass is burned over, the capturing expedition sets out. A great safari including Magnette, all the best Azandeh hunters, and a number of tame elephants, leaves Api. A main camp is established in the forest, and eight or ten of the hunters, with guns and ropes, set forth on the trail of a herd. The Indian method of capture by pitfalls and stockades will not do for the wilder, more powerful African elephant. The Api method is to cut a cow and calf out of the herd, shoot or drive away the mother, and by a miracle of adroitness and speed catch the powerful, agile, savage cub and get a rope around his leg before he slips out of their reach into the jungle. Then they all throw themselves on him, seize ears, tusks, tail, feet, and drag him to the nearest tree, where he is securely fastened, each of his four feet to a different tree, so that he cannot thrash himself to death. Very young calves are no longer taken. They must have passed the milk stage before they can thrive in captivity, and all have plenty of fight in them.

Word is then sent to the main camp and a tame elephant is brought out. The young elephant is tied to the old one and slowly marched back. The old fellow seems to understand what it is all about, takes entire charge of the young one, and manages very well. This process is repeated until the required number are taken. The hunt is usually over by May. Then the safari returns to Api.

Magnette's experience bears out many of the current legends about elephants—that they never forget, that they have more than animal intelligence and are capable of great affection for each other. The big elephant adopts the little wild one put in its charge and grows to love it dearly. And when the little one gets into any difficulty, Magnette says, it calls loudly for the big one, who never fails to help it out. Sometimes they have great difficulty in separating them when the time comes. He is convinced, too, that these animals reason. When an elephant is plowing and strikes a root he does not, Magnette says, plunge and drag at it as a horse would. He turns round, takes the front end of the plow in his trunk, and lifts it over the obstruction. "And once we hitched an elephant alone to a two-elephant cart with a center pole. He came to a sharp corner, and although he had never pulled a cart before, he stopped, thought it over, then took the pole in his trunk and swung the whole cart around." As yet no African elephants are bred in captivity. This would require an equipment and facilities which do not exist.

When the Api elephant is sufficiently grown up and trained for work he is sold or rented to planters. "The overhead to the man who buys him," Magnette said, "is very low. Elephants don't consume gasoline, and they find their own food in the bush. A pair of elephants can haul a four- or five-ton load thirty kilometers a day or plow three acres in a morning. They are particularly good at clearing land and hauling logs. The wear and tear is small if they are well treated, and they outlive many masters. In fact they become stronger and stronger during the first hundred years, which," he added smiling, "is more than you can say of a Ford."

The one thing Magnette cannot endure is the thought of adult, untamed African elephants that somehow or other have

got into European zoos. They are chained day and night to stakes from which the keepers dare not remove them—tied short, so that they may not be able to thrash about and so, mercifully, end their lives. Instead, they are simply left to pine themselves to death.

The time had come at last when the real object of our visit had to be revealed to M. Magnette. We explained as mildly as we could about the cinema and the fake hunt and the rubber spear, and M. Magnette was very suave, very friendly, and highly diplomatic. Perhaps we did not know that in a very few weeks he would be leaving Api for good? A matter of health. He had withstood a long lifetime in the Congo but was now beginning to fail. In view of his approaching departure most of his best elephants and personnel had been sent to Wando. Had we not heard that there was a new station called Wando? Wando was only a few days' journey from Api, and there, by all means, we must go. The place was in charge of a certain Lieutenant Offermans, who would be glad, Magnette was sure of that, to do anything for us. A charming fellow.

There was something so final about M. Magnette's decree that we merely asked him if we might photograph his herd, grazing, before we left for Wando.

Certainly, said M. Magnette (looking relieved), if we weren't afraid the hobbles would show. Evidently this was not Magnette's first experience with the makers of African moving-pictures who wanted to film tame elephants for wild! It would be all right, he added, if we took the pictures in grass where you couldn't see their feet.

Next morning at dawn I was awakened by the pressure of a strange object against my cheek. A native stood by my cot, shoving a pitcher of milk at me through the mosquito net,

THE MANGBETU WOMEN ARE BEAUTIFUL

(*See page* 171)

PAINTED HOUSES OF THE MANGBETUS

(*See page* 169)

fresh milk from Magnette's herd of little humped-back cattle, a rare possession in the tsetse-infested forests of the Congo and one of which he is very proud. They grazed now on the meadows in front, tended by a boy and surrounded by the delicate snow-white birds that conveniently pick ticks off cattle and are protected by law in the Congo. Beautiful tall brown people moved along the road, the early air was blue and gold, and in a field near by, two great swaying elephants trod softly, dragging a plow.

For several days we took our way toward Wando across rolling plains, the far-off hills blue with smoke from native bush fires. Wando was a group of low buildings on a bare hill. A fence surrounded them, and the locked gate was grudgingly opened by a native policeman after he had asked permission from, I suppose, Lieutenant Offermans. We crossed a blazing yard to a bungalow on the edge of the hill overlooking the river. On the porch a young lion with a collar round its neck and a wounded paw looked at us and snarled.

The young lieutenant received us in a pleasant veranda room full of spurs, bits, riding-whips, pistols, boar's tusks, horns of antelope and buffalo, and a cavalry saddle, well oiled. He was a blue-eyed, very military person and extremely courteous. BUT—

Photograph his elephants? Make them act for a moving-picture camera? Track them? Attack them with rubber spears? Order them about, doubtless speaking to them roughly? Offermans was aghast! They were trained only to do certain things, not to act. Moreover, the commotion about the place would be unthinkable. Why, he had a number of very young elephants in the most critical stage of their training! As a rule even automobiles were not permitted on the premises, noise of every kind being strictly forbidden.

Could we then accompany the hunt and make pictures of the capture?

This was an even more fabulous request. He himself only went to the main camp, as the Azandehs did not want any one with them at the moment of the capture. He would stretch a point and try, if we cared to give him the camera, to get something for us, although he warned us it might take weeks. But as to our going, that was outside the pale of human thought. All in all, he was a good deal less suave than M. Magnette had been, but then he didn't have any other place to send us. He made, however, one concession. We could photograph the lullaby scene that evening when the *cornacs* were putting the babies to sleep, if we were careful not to get too close and frighten them.

We withdrew to the car—the truck had not yet arrived—opened a can of raw tomatoes and some sardines, ate stealthily and messily on the running-board, and waited for the bedtime story-hour of the little elephants. The lieutenant departed in his Ford for Faradje.

Toward sunset the assistant superintendent, a kindly youngish middle-aged man, asked me if I should like to go to the river to see the little ones bathed. The road led down through a cut bank to a beautiful tranquil place by the water's edge where jewel-like fishing martens which had their nests in the red clay flew swiftly back and forth, mere flashes of piercing color in the rosy sunset light. The river was like glass; the trees and vines growing along the bottoms were dazzlingly green against the yellow veldt spreading away from the other shore. And the air was filled with the soft white ash of distant bush fires sifting gently down like falling snow.

This place, my companion told me, had been in ancient days an elephant village. They came from far and wide to camp

and graze and bathe in the river. Elephants, he remarked, love beauty, just the same as we do.

Presently the perfect quiet was broken by a perfect sound. Sometimes it was one mellow voice chanting softly, sometimes a whole chorus. The voices were African, but not the song. "They are coming. Will you please go up on top of the bank and hide behind the trees where they cannot see you? And please make no noise."

Along the river road, stepping softly, with swinging, reaching trunks, came the elephants, tiny ones chained by the foot to old ones, young adolescents walking alone, all with *cornacs* on their backs. All but the oldest looked uneasy and suspicious. With their attendants still on their shoulders, they entered the water. Some had to be coaxed; others, once in, wouldn't come out. They ducked and splashed, filled their trunks with water, and sprayed themselves. The *cornacs* helped them bathe, scrubbed their ears, and gave them sugar cane. We waited in hiding until they came out and swung up the road toward the corrals. Nor would my companion go at once to the place where they were to be chained and fed. "We'll give them time to get settled," he said. But I think he had another motive. He suggested that we pass by his house: "I should like you to see my wife and"—he blushed—"my baby."

"Is it a young baby?"

"Yes, Madame, born in the Congo. He's only five months old and he weighs fourteen kilos and a half. A doctor came through here not long ago and he said, 'The only trouble with that baby is he is five months old and he looks eight.' "

In a pleasant bungalow we had a glass of pink syrup and water and looked at the baby.

"Yes, he is very well," said the mother, "only five months old and weighs fourteen kilos."

"—And a half," said the father.

"He's as big as a baby of eight months," said the mother.

"—Bigger," said the father.

"He takes his quinine every day," she added a little anxiously.

"Yes, but it does not hurt him," said the father. "The doctor said the only trouble with that baby is—"

When he finished telling me what the doctor said, our driver, who was also paying them a visit, remarked, "He's as smart as a child twelve months old."

"—Smarter," added the father, staring at his child with a kind of wistful awe.

Opposite each other in two long rows, the baby elephants were chained to stakes. The photographer was already in the open space between them with the camera. He began to turn the crank, and the baby elephant nearest him began to scream with rage and fear. The superintendent and I arrived just at that moment. The official was horrified. "Tell him to stop! What would the lieutenant say? Tell him to stop! Get him away! Get him away!"

Charlie hastily moved off and set up the camera elsewhere. The *cornacs* were all beside their elephants. They had palm branches and now began to brush the restless, complaining little elephants and to sing the old, old lullaby brought from India by the seven unruly mahouts. The chant was Hindu, but the rhythm was pure Congo. The babies, who had been squealing and pulling at their chains, became quiet. Gradually they began to rock a little to the music. From time to time they stretched out their upcurled trunks for a bit of pineapple, like spoiled, contented children.

The red sun set. The bedtime story hour of the baby elephants was over. Green fodder was placed before them; the big

elephants too were fed. Then the attendants ran as fast as their legs could carry them to a place where the superintendent waited. They lined up before him, went through a brief military drill, saluted, and were dismissed. That was the last we saw of Wando—the rows of big and little elephants, the superintendent's baby being wheeled about by a ragged black boy, and the lieutenant's orderly, in a jockey vest and cap and white riding-breeches patched every color of the rainbow, standing at salute, the white ash of the bush fires drifting through the darkening twilight.

Chapter 13

STRANGE INTERLUDE

It was after sunset when we reached the dreary little *gîte* perched on a vast bare plain. The truck had preceded us by several hours, but when we arrived we found only a chaos of unpacked luggage and a seething mass of servants doing nothing. We bore down upon them with even more indignation than these astounding buoyees usually evoked. Why were the beds and tables not set up, the fires not lighted, lanterns not filled, dinner not ready?

A clamor of voices replied in incomprehensible Bangala-French. There had been a fight—two fights. Ipoka had accused Nimo of smoking hemp and had got hit in the eye. Nimo admitted that he smoked hemp but alleged that it made him work better. The languid Kole had kicked Soto in the leg. Soto suddenly began to limp. He displayed a wound. Everybody shouted a version of the story. Our white driver hurled himself into the mêlée: "They're good-for-nothing, all of them! And that mission boy is the worst of the lot. He's a thief."

For days after this untoward accusation Gabriel was to be seen kneeling conspicuously in courtyards, saying his prayers over a rosary never before in evidence. Nobody ever found out why Kole kicked Soto. But as he was my boy, I felt that probably he was right.

Already the psychological topsy-turviness wrought by a trip

of this kind—chiefly a strange humorlessness—was beginning to manifest itself. We had left all our books in Stanleyville and since leaving there had not seen a newspaper, received a letter or a cable, or heard anything whatever from the outside world. We had been incessantly in the company of each other and of our singular staff with no diversions to maintain the usual sense of proportion toward life in general. Little things began to seem absurdly important. Each member of the party became irrationally the champion of his own boy, was secretly annoyed if he were criticized, took incredibly humorless dislikes to other people's boys. All except Blair. Gabriel was his servant and he detested him throughout, and that fact, from this queer twist that solitude and remoteness put into your temper, made the rest of us like Gabriel better.

About us the brown plain spread away to blue hills where Lieutenant Offermans had advised us to go to hunt. Elephant, buffalo, even the rare white rhino which may not be hunted without a special license, were, he said, abundant in that broken, savage-looking wilderness. But there was only one big-game hunter among us, and he had planned to hunt when we should reach Avacubi on the Ituri River—a better elephant country—and we saw no reason for changing this plan.

Just now the film was all-important—but what about the film? For weeks we had rushed from place to place with a whole fleet of automobiles, dragging with us tons of luggage and eight impossible servants, and nothing in the way of an African melodrama or even good travel pictures had as yet been achieved.

Then our outfit! Rolled puttees were so hot that I was wearing paper-thin mosquito boots with high heels not intended for walking. None of the Paris-made solera cloth suits was

right. Becoming sun-helmets did not properly keep off the sun, and those that did were such a horror that one dodged the camera whenever possible. We had traveled along roads where guinea fowl and pheasants were so thick you actually ran over them, but we had repacked so hastily in Stanleyville that we brought sixteen-gauge shells for a twelve-gauge gun. We did have five heavy rifles with us, but the only wild animals we had so far seen in the heart of Africa were on a leash. The picture suddenly presented itself to us in all its simple grandeur and we laughed almost until it was time to start our next day's Marathon.

Chapter 14

THE U. S. IS WARNED

"PRETTY soon," the pale little cotton agent said, peering sharply into my face, "the United States will have to look out! We can raise cotton much cheaper here, and in a few years you'll have to look out for us. Already your Mississippi floods were a great benefit to us and soon our competition will worry you." As he talked he absent-mindedly emptied a bottle of whiskey from which he had been asked to take a drink.

We were following the motor road in and out of the forest through what is called the Uele district on our way to the country of the Pygmies and the Mangbetus. This region takes its name from the Uele River which flows from east to west across the northern part of the Congo, and here the Belgian government has undertaken its great cotton experiment. There are a few white planters, but it is the natives for the most part who raise the cotton, the government compelling them to plant and harvest a given amount.

They, it must be understood, by no means want to raise cotton. It is hard work, and they do not enjoy hard work, especially work which produces something they can neither eat nor, in that form, wear. If they raise a great deal, the agricultural agents tell them, then the printed calicos they all like so much will become cheap. To which the natives merely

reply that they were told the same thing five years before and that the price of cotton cloth has gone up ever since. "That's the way they argue," the agent exclaimed contemptuously.

And wherever you see cotton markets you see many trading-posts where the black planters can quickly get rid of their hard-earned cotton money. "It is our effort," the official explained, "to create needs for the blacks they didn't know they had. That way they have the incentive to work." A very neat summing up, perhaps, of a little matter called civilization!

For miles before reaching a cotton market we passed natives trudging along the road, baskets stuffed with white cotton hanging from a strap around the head and resting on a black, naked back. Then came the warehouse, the space in front a solid mass of shouting, milling aborigines. Chiefs reclined, government medals hanging on their breasts, their music and their wives about them, their head men striding about, flourishing rhino-hide whips at the women workers who had planted, raised, and brought the cotton to market. The greater part of the crowd was made up of women, generally from remote villages, and they were, as a rule, less accustomed to white people than the men are. Nor is it often that a white woman visits a cotton market, especially one who aroused their ever-ready cordiality and emotionalism by handing out cigarettes. At first they peered into my face from a little distance, yelling when I smiled, fleeing away with a rustling of dry leaf skirts if I put out my hand.

But soon they gained confidence. They began crowding in, rushing toward me from every part of the field, almost trampling me down. From every side hundreds of pink-palmed hands reached out trying to touch me. The air rang with ear-splitting shrieks. Once, in the heat and dust, I passed my tongue over my parched lips. A roar went up from the ladies. They

all opened their mouths and passed their own bright pink tongues over their black lips, thinking it some kind of salutation. This howling mob and I moved slowly toward the warehouse, the uproar and confusion increasing until tall native *asikaris* rushed out and drove them off with clubs.

Two or three white men—the cotton buyers and the government official who supervises the transaction, presumably in the interest of the natives—sat in a doorway. The waiting line moved slowly forward, and one by one the slender brown women handed in their baskets of cotton to be weighed, held out a folded leaf on which the money was laid and a cube of salt—black clerks writing the transaction in a ledger. I sat down, stared at intently by a dozen chiefs who reclined inside the warehouse and by the mob of natives in the door. Having torn my finger nail, I took this opportunity to smooth it with a file. Exclamations of amazement, almost of fear, went up. The black clerk stared, explained in a loud voice what I was doing. The chiefs and the people in the doorway crowded inside to observe the strange process at closer range; the whole market was at a standstill until the police again took a hand.

We lodged that night in the near-by village. It was on a hill, and all round the wide circle of the horizon brush fires were burning, the yellow flames licking up into the blue. The square was filled with wild-looking natives fresh from the *brousse,* a crowd which respectfully parted to let a little procession pass. First came a man in a tattered uniform carrying a Belgian flag, then a man carrying a bugle, then four men carrying an empty *tipoye* (a traveling-chair swung on two poles), then a man with a steamer chair, then soldiers with flintlock guns, and in their midst, walking slowly, haughtily, and followed by his women, a youngish man. He had a red-brown skin, pale eyes, straight black hair worn long and tied, a girlish, sinister look.

A chief. He saluted my companion and was presented to me, giving me a look which seemed to conceal all thought. Arab, Coptic, Persian—what foreign blood had the slave-trade days bequeathed him? I wondered. Once the power of these Congo kings was absolute, and looking at this one, my blood ran cold. What would it be like to be defenseless before a man like that, with those merciless hybrid eyes, that look of inhuman coldness?

Throughout the Congo the government sustains the native chiefs and rules to a certain extent through them, since it is easier to deal with one than with a thousand scattered natives. The black ruler has his soldiers, his secret police, and almost unlimited power to compel his subjects to do what the state requires of them. He in turn is responsible to it. And as the perquisites of chiefhood are sweet and it is never very painful to make other people work, he carries out his part very well.

Another procession followed and another chief, a giant, pure black, with a look of brute force and shrewdness. His only garment was a brand-new raincoat. Then a boy chief not over thirteen, preceded by his orchestra, which played loudly as the youth marched up the road, his tutor respectfully by his side, his wives behind. And finally a handsome fellow in European clothes whose father, a famous hunter, had been killed several years before by an elephant. The full tragedy of this event was mitigated, the chief explained, by the fact that they had been able, in spite of the vigilance of white officials, to smuggle two ladies, wives of the deceased, into the grave alive, his father's body resting, as is right and proper, upon them. Formerly, in many tribes, no portion of the chief's body was supposed ever to touch the ground, even in life. An official told me of a chief he once knew who was always carried on the

shoulders of slaves and at night slept on the prone bodies of twelve wives.

When a chief dies the disturbances which follow the death are so violent that even now the nearest white official makes all haste to be on the spot. The event used to be attended by appalling ceremonies. Slaves were knocked on the head every few minutes during the funeral proceedings so that the deceased should have plenty of people to wait on him in the beyond. Living women were compelled to lie down in the grave, the dead chief placed in their arms, and all were happily buried together. The body was always in an advanced stage of decomposition, as the nearest relatives had held it on their knees for days, after which it had been left on a platform for a far longer time than could have been pleasant for anybody, while the funeral dances went on. In some tribes the body was eaten to perpetuate the fine qualities of the dead man. In almost all, the heart, brains, and other symbolic portions were devoured.

The drama of the demise was greatly enhanced by the fact that the Congolese mind refused—and still refuses—to accept the possibility of a natural death. If he were not killed by a wild animal, the deceased however old, had been put out of the way by an enemy who laid a spell of some kind upon him. Almost any one does as a suspect and upon him the medicine men set to work. Formerly, if the accused survived the poison they made him drink, were not burned by the fire or drowned in the water, or hurt by the various tortures practiced upon him, he was innocent. If he succumbed his guilt was sufficiently proved.

In cannibal tribes the grave was hidden and left unmarked so that it could not be rifled for food. A long period of mourn-

ing was and still is observed, the official termination of which is celebrated by a dance. Officials believe that more of the ancient rites are secretly practiced than it is convenient for them to acknowledge. But they know too, that time and the changing order are gradually putting an end to them even more effectually than discipline.

We slept that night in the vacant part of a house occupied by the cotton agent. He had a sharp nose and the kind of sharp prying eyes that see all the unimportant things. He was curious about us, vaguely suspicious. "Now, that *asikari* you've got [meaning Madjeduka, the gun-boy]—he says he's going to shoot elephants for you. Have you got a license? You'll be arrested; they'll take away your guns."

"He's not an *asikari,* he's not going to shoot elephants for us, and we have licenses."

"He's not an *asikari?* But he's in uniform. He has no business to be in uniform if he's no longer in the army. He'll be arrested. And those other boys? Have you taken them to the administrator here?"

"No."

"Well, you'd better. You're passing from one district to another. They must be inspected and get permission to pass."

"Nonsense, we have permission."

"You'll be arrested. You'll be fined."

All evening he buzzed about us, prying, offering gratuitous advice. A young Negress whom he seemed in no way anxious to conceal was much in evidence, going in and out of his quarters or reclining on a chaise longue in the rear surrounded by the less well-placed members of her family, who, by their looks, were straight from the jungle. When not tormenting us, her master sat on her chair holding her hands, whispering

with her and with his servants. Rumors began to fly about like bats. Our boys were in a panic.

"Must we go to the *administrateur?* Will they put Madjeduka in jail? Are we all going to be sent back?"

"No, we have authority from the Boula Matadi in Stanleyville to take you all over the Congo." (Unfortunately!)

Remembering this young man's quite open display of his native female companion and all the similar households we had come across, I asked a certain district commissioner whether the natives thought less of a white man who lived with a native woman or who got drunk.

"By no means," he replied. "You must never confuse their idea of morality with ours. They do not respect continence or sobriety. Those things, in fact, mean nothing whatsoever to them. What they do respect is strength, courage, fair-mindedness, intelligence. They respect the official whom they cannot fool, who rules with a rod of iron, and who is just. If his black mistress dominates him, as sometimes happens, they despise him. Otherwise they think nothing at all of the matter."

"What about native marriage? Is it a binding arrangement and is it respected?"

"Yes, in the native way. It is not a moral, but a business, relation. A man buys his wives. He turns over to the woman's parents a certain number of goats, knives, saucepans, in payment. If a wife leaves her husband her family returns the dowry. The wife is the man's property, like a horse or an automobile. If he wishes to lend or even rent her to an outsider, that is quite all right, but he must know of and consent to the affair. He must not be deceived. You, for instance, will lend your automobile, but you do not wish any one to come into your garage and take it without permission. Formerly a man, or at least a chief, could kill an unfaithful wife. I knew a

chief many years ago who tore out his wife's eyes. Now they imprison them, punish them in different ways. Among the common people a man often comes to me when he has been deceived. I make the offender pay an indemnity to the husband—3 francs, or if the wife is very pretty, 5. But do not suppose that romantic love, and often very lasting love, does not exist between native men and women. I have known many cases of it. Hearts," he added philosophically, "are pretty much the same everywhere, but institutions and ethics and philosophies differ. There is no way of comparing those which exist here to ours."

Polygamy, we gathered, was much frowned on by the Belgian government. Empire requires population, and when one man can marry from two to two hundred and fifty fine young women, the birth rate is necessarily lowered. To discourage polygamy each native, be he chief or simple worker, is taxed 10 to 20 francs a year for each wife. Slowly the tax is being raised until, it is hoped, the high cost of harems will become entirely prohibitive.

A MANGBETU LADY OF QUALITY

(*See page* 167)

GIVING THE MANGBETU BABY HIS ARISTOCRATIC POINTED HEAD

(*See page* 171)

Chapter 15

PYGMIES

THE Greek said it was the twenty-fifth, the priest said it was the twenty-first, I thought it was Thursday, everybody else said it was Saturday. Anyhow, it didn't matter. The truck was to come at eight o'clock, it came at twelve. It was to be uncovered, it was covered. The driver was to speak French, and he did not speak French. Perhaps it all happened because the transportation agent was excited. He had just received a letter: "It is from Mr. Eastman Kodak," he declared breathlessly. "He will be here on the one of February to go elephant shooting. Mr. Eastman Kodak is the richest man in the world."

Our objective was Rungu. Pygmies were somewhere in the forest below that place and the *administrateur* at Rungu would, the transportation agent assured us, be able to tell us just where and how to find them. A day's journey took us to Rungu and we sat swallowed up in enormous low wicker chairs on the veranda room of the *administrateur's* thatched bungalow, talking about Pygmies. Below, the river gleamed placidly, gray ducks floated, and a boat song sounded faintly from above a hidden bend. On the opposite shore the deathly-quiet jungle crowded to the water's edge.

Fouat, the *administrateur,* was a slim, dark-eyed young man with more than the usual Congo pallor and was dressed in

sleeveless khaki shirt and shorts. He was a friendly, extremely able person, full of enthusiasm for his job, for Rungu, for Africa. "The Pygmies," he exclaimed, "my tickie-tickies? You want to photograph them? That will be easy. They know me, they trust me. I will send word at once that you are coming. You can go part way by motor, part by safari. I will arrange it all." Lambent-eyed *asikaris* with bare legs and wide scarlet sashes, who were lounging outside, rushed back and forth carrying out M. Fouat's swift commands. Within five minutes a runner was despatched on a several days' walk to the Pygmy country, and a message went off to a near-by Dominican mission, asking that they rent us their truck to make the journey.

It was Fouat who first brought the Pygmies in this part of the forest into relation with the Belgian government. He had had to be patient. Gifts were sent to them and flattering messages. But they were shy and it was only after many delays that they at last agreed to meet him at a certain place in the forest. He went alone and found them there. They smoked together, he gave them salt, and they were no longer afraid.

We could not leave Rungu for several days, and M. Fouat invited us to establish camp in his grounds, as the *gîte d'étape* was in bad repair. So the tents were pitched under the palms above the river while Alice and I were invited to occupy a vacant room under his hospitable thatch. Our bath tub was set up in his pantry, and we bathed there by candlelight with cold-eyed spiders big as dinner plates staring fixedly from the damp walls. When rain washed the ground from under the dining-room fly we ate on M. Fouat's back porch, and Sindani was installed in the *administrateur's* cook house. It was a tiny place, always packed with natives doing nothing in particular and with prowling dogs who licked the pots and platters clean. The brick oven, when not baking our bread, was occupied by

a lean bitch and four mangy puppies. And M. Fouat commandeered eggs and chickens for us at the official price—pitifully low from the point of view of the natives who sold them—of three to six cents each for chickens and a third of a cent apiece for eggs.

Five or six days, full to the last drop of peace, went by in Rungu before word came that the Pygmies would be waiting for us beyond Nala. All day natives came and went on noiseless feet. Into their loin cloths were thrust ivory-handled knives, beautifully carved and obviously antique, but they would not sell them although we offered more than they could earn in a month, in many months, for one. All day the young *administrateur* patiently listened to petitions and complaints, settled disputes with justice.

There is a certain tempo to life in a forest outpost, a measured, unhurried time, set, it would seem by the rhythm of the blacks—their walk, the slow gliding of the dugouts along the glassy rivers. The sun wheels across the sky, throwing long shadows first to right, then to left, along the red earth, and at noon burning away all shade and all color. Only the underlying measure of the songs, the never quiet roll of the drums are swift—like the regular, brisk pulse-beats of a drowsy man. . . .

Father Bonhomme, dressed in high boots and knickerbockers, his vast beard streaming along the wind, sat behind the wheel, looking excited and a little scared. Two natives stood on the running-board, reminding him to blow his horn and slow down for curves. On the car were ourselves, a portion of our luggage, and several of our boys. The road was beautiful, the air soft and full of sweet smells; monkeys peered down at us from high tree tops.

When we reached Nala, a crumb of a village lost in a

splendid forest of royal palms, the porters commandeered by Fouat had not yet arrived. So we installed ourselves in the tumbledown *gîte* to wait. The stupid young chief Nala had his chair placed near by where he could stare at us, and his pet mongoose moved about with a knowing air, investigating the luggage. Apropos of nothing, a beautiful boy danced, quite perfectly, a bow and arrow dance.

As it was rumored that "little people" had been seen near the village that day, a native was sent out to look in the neighboring thickets, and he soon flushed them like a covey of quail. They approached timidly across the blazing square—about a dozen of them, all men, carrying small sets of bows and arrows and small spears. The bows were bound with skins and ornamented with charms, and the tiny reed arrows were feathered with bits of leaves. One or two had bugles of antelope horn slung over their shoulders. Their dress was a bark loin cloth, and a tiny straw hat was pinned to their hair with sharpened bones. Some of them wore small pointed beards. They were not midgets but very small men, ranging from four to five feet in height. Their skin had a more reddish tint than that of the other natives; their foreheads were broad, eyes far apart and prominent, faces narrowing to a rather pointed chin. They had a look of keener intelligence, too, and an alert, sensitive, I was about to say suffering expression, even when they smiled. That smile, complicated with thought and even with sorrow, set them apart from the other Congolese peoples and brought them, it seemed, far closer to us.

They stood now very straight in a row before the *gîte* and looked up at us earnestly, like little soldiers who weren't quite sure what they were in for but would do their duty. But as their shrewd, wise eyes searched ours, they seemed to realize that we belonged to a (notoriously) good-natured race of which

they had never heard and that the whole thing was a lark. Visibly they relaxed and smiled.

"You must not be afraid of us," said Père Bonhomme in Bangala to an interpreter who translated it to something they could understand.

"No, are we not brothers?" they replied, just like Pygmies in a book. And their next answer was equally satisfactory. We had asked them how many of their people were at Tongolo's: "As many as the leaves on the roof!"

We presented them with cigarettes and cubes of salt; then the Pygmy herald sounded several strains on his antelope horn and they all shook hands with us, first pressing our hands, then seizing the thumb and wringing that—a handshake which prevailed throughout this region.

The Pygmies are, it is said, the aborigines of Africa. When and if (as is now believed) the Bantus, untold centuries ago, migrated to Africa from Oceania, bringing the agricultural arts, the native Africans, now known as Pygmies, were driven deeper and deeper into the forest, where they endured much hardship and incidentally developed the finest woodcraft in the world. They may have been a small race to begin with, or the hard and sunless life may have dwarfed them. However that may be, they are a totally different people from the Bantus. A few ethnologists, to be sure, believe all to be of the same stock, but after seeing a good deal of both Pygmies and Bantu peoples my entirely unimportant opinion is on the side of those scientists who believe there is no original kinship.

At dawn, when the porters arrived to convoy us to Tongolo's village, the little people were nowhere to be seen. The trail led through a violent mass of palms, ferns, huge shrubs, creepers—all engaged in the silent, ferocious warfare of the jungle, strangling, devouring the very substance one of another, be-

coming that other themselves, fighting their way upward, *coûte que coûte,* to the sun. And far above this green shambles the conquerors, the great kings of the forest, towered serenely. In the gold twilight black and white birds sang like nightingales and the air quivered and fluttered with gorgeous butterflies.

Tongolo is not a real chief and his village not a real village. He is an ex-soldier put into power by the government, and the villagers are other ex-soldiers gathered together with their numerous wives to be kept out of mischief under the not too distant eye of Fouat—soldiering having, it seems, a bad effect on native morals. Tongolo met us halfway with flags and bugles and escorted us in military style to his village where all was prepared—*gîte* well swept, wood and water waiting, the tribunal with its carved pillars put at our disposition as dining- and sitting-room.

We had hardly time to sit down before drums began drumming, seed rattles rattled, and across the square came the whole Pygmy tribe, dancing. Pygmy women dressed in a banana leaf or a small bark-cloth apron, Pygmy children in nothing at all, an old, old Pygmy chief with a grizzled stubble on his chin and one eye gone. And how they danced!—their gyrations more grotesque and out of the realm of all comprehension than any we had seen. Sometimes it was the men, dancing alone, to the accompaniment of slapping hands and an orchestra of rattles and drums, sometimes the whole troupe moving round and round in a circle.

During the course of the festivities palm wine was offered them and twists of native tobacco. They had built a little fire under some palms about which the women sat with their babies and where all ate, drank, rested, and smoked—smoked banana-stem pipes six feet long, with the little bowl set in the

far end. It took two Pygmies to manage one. All the while, in groups large or small, the dance went on. And we simply could not keep these "shy, woodland creatures," whom we had thought it would take weeks to tame, away from the front of the camera. They were perfectly ecstatic when it was pointed at them and Charlie was turning the crank.

The throb of drums and intoning of the dance songs inflamed the village. The big natives did not mix with the Pygmies, but everywhere under the palms, men and women began to dance. The whole village rocked and shuffled; dust rose; the smell of human bodies was suffocating, the relentless pounding of the drums never ceased. The old, one-eyed Pygmy chief, exhilarated with palm wine, advanced to the tribunal, performing a fabulous toe dance which gradually became extremely obscene. A Pygmy woman, with a 50-centime piece stuck to her forehead, brought Père Bonhomme a jug of palm wine—a dubious and not overclean beverage consumed with gusto by the good Father. And two adorable little naked children sat on his lap all day feeling his beard with wonder.

Once more the scenario came out. It called for Pygmies perceiving hunters with terror, following them through the forest with poisoned arrows ready to repel attack, creeping up to dead camp fire and retrieving with amazement strange articles left behind by whites. But it was now quite clear that we should have to teach the Pygmies to act wild—to act the way American audiences, supposedly, expected them to. Six Pygmies who looked as if they might be good actors were selected, and in the clear light of morning they, the camera man, the director carrying the properties, an interpreter, and most of the village as onlookers, set out for the "lot." I followed later in the day.

The wicked sunlight poured its white fire on a small opening in the jungle. Beside a dead camp fire were strewn a mirror, biscuit and sardine tins, a cap, and a white kid slipper. Charlie's boy held a green-lined umbrella over Charlie and over the camera. The director's voice was almost gone, his hand cut, his clothes black with sweat. He was lurking out of the forest trail menacing space with a poisoned bow and arrow and showing the Pygmies how scared they were at the sight of the strange white beings from across the seas. The Pygmies, their brilliant eyes alert, watched intently. Somebody shouted instructions in English, some one else shouted them in French, the priest yelled them in Bangala or Mayogo, Tongolo screamed them at the Pygmies—presumably in Pygmy.

Watching intently, they began to act. Consummately they imitated what they saw, repeating with the greatest skill the gestures by which Anglo-Saxons (in the barn-storming tradition) express terror, amusement, suspicion, joy. As they performed, roars burst from the ring of insanely amused villagers howling on the fringes of the "lot." One tall blue-black ex-soldier with filed teeth, standing by me, became apoplectic with laughter; he groaned, he rolled on the ground. The dear little conscientious Pygmies, delighted to be the center of attraction, lurked after the director. They stole up to the camp fire, picked up the objects scattered about it, peered into the mirror with adequate amazement at so marvelous an object, tossed their caps in the air when they found some biscuits, squabbled over the sardine tin, attempted to put on the slipper. They lurked, too, along the fringe of jungle, stalking us. They peered, beckoned, aimed poisoned arrows at our supposed safari, registering acute alarm and at all times the proper degree of wildness learned from the gestures of their instructors. As they acted we all continued to give instructions and

demonstrate action while Charlie implored hectically from behind the camera: "Keep your shadows out of it! Hold that guy— Retake— Get those other guys into the light!" And the guys, first Pygmy cinema troupe, I imagine, in history, leapt and grimaced and made gestures no Pygmy on land or sea ever made before.

The afternoon wore away, and weary, we toiled back to camp. There an insane uproar of drums was going on. The wives of the soldiers had put on ballet skirts freshly picked from the trees—layer on layer of banana leaves—and were doing a special woman's dance. They were lined up, a hundred or more, at a point about two hundred yards from the orchestra. From there, one after the other, they raced down the field as fast as their fine, naked legs could carry them, shrieking, waving seed rattles above their heads, halted abruptly in front of the orchestra to do a certain curious step, and then raced back to their place in the line.

Over and over and over again they did this. Sweat poured from their gleaming bodies, their eyes bulged, dust rose in clouds, the whole world seemed filled with flying brown legs, quivering breasts, and wildly waving arms. A fringe of gentlemen stood on the sidelines, watching. The orchestra played madly; every now and then exhausted drummers were dragged off and replaced by fresh ones. This Marathon kept up at top speed all the rest of the afternoon, all evening, and well into the night, until that everlasting jazz so got on our nerves that we had to send out and beg the ladies to desist.

Most of these women were Medjes, many of them extremely pretty, the lightest-hearted natives, it is said, in Africa. One out of every four seemed to be a wife of Tongolo's, and the number of his children he did not know. When we asked him to line up all his wives and babies for a photograph, they

reached halfway across the square, but he apologized, saying that many were working in the fields.

He was a perfect host in every way. That evening when we were finishing dinner by dim lantern light in the center of the huge tribunal, a strange group materialized out of the gloom. Behind a man with a flaring torch appeared others, dragging and prodding something which turned out to be a wildly reluctant black goat sent by Tongolo for next day's luncheon; its dying protests soon floated toward us from the near-by thicket.

A winding path through gorgeous jungle took us next day to the Pygmies' own village. It nestled in the sunny shadows of a forest opening and might almost have passed by unperceived, so like the natural growth were the small leaf huts nestling near clumps of bamboos or palms. Just now it was deserted, as most of the Pygmies were reveling at Tongolo's. Here and there, however, an old, old man or woman sat beside a fire, each one by himself, profoundly alone, inactive, quiet. The tides of life seemed to have receded so far from these tiny ancient beings that one fancied Death herself would scarcely find it worth her while to visit them, but that they would live on and on, sitting naked, silent, without thoughts, by their low doorways in the sunny shadows of the forest. Aside from the huts there was nothing in the Pygmy village—only a cracked pot or two, a broken spear; nothing else. They had no belongings, no clothes, no furniture. This was what impressed us most. They owned so little more than the antelopes and long-tailed monkeys they skillfully pierced with their small arrows. I suppose civilization will soon create for them, too, "needs they didn't know they had," make them laborers, buyers, taxpayers; put them in

school, in church, and in jail. And I'm glad to have seen them before they shall have been overtaken by Progress.

Loath to part with our, or at any rate M. Fouat's, "tickie-tickies," and thinking too they might be useful in other parts of the film, we invited them to travel with us for a fortnight. Great was the surprise and consternation this suggestion produced! Many of them refused in genuine alarm. But the chief boldly declared himself ready to go. "Am I a woman," Father Bonhomme reported him as saying, "that I should be afraid?" (A familiar ring to that sentiment!) Six of his companions joined—with certain conditions—in the adventure. They must have with them a big native whom they trusted—Tongolo's son, by preference—and at least one Pygmy woman to cook their food. And so it was arranged. Tongolo's oldest son and the wife of the Pygmy chief accompanied the seven Pygmy men.

No time was required for preparation, as the travelers had nothing either to leave behind or to take with them, only a cooking-pot or two, their bows and arrows, spears and antelope horn bugles—no blankets, mats, or covering of any kind for cold nights, and, of course, no clothes. The entire outfit of the Pygmy wife was a very small bark apron, a very large leopard's tooth hanging round her neck, and a seed rattle. I shivered for her when the truck was in motion and the cool of evening crept out of the forest, but she only wound her bare arms around her plump naked body and laughed.

All the gay Medje women of the village accompanied us on the safari to the motor road, to be with their husbands who were carrying our loads and to witness the departure of the Pygmies. The actual leave-taking proved to be difficult. The wives of several other Pygmies, appalled at the thought of

parting with their husbands (the Pygmies are, as a rule, monogamous), insisted on going too. They even, in a restrained, well-bred way, made little scenes and had to be dragged, resisting, off the truck. The young and extremely pretty wife of Tongolo's son, dressed in nothing but a sliver of banana leaf, also got on the truck and simply couldn't be got off—short of actual violence. So we took her as far as Rungu. The baggage was put aboard; we all got on top of it—boys, Pygmies, us. Father Bonhomme took the wheel, flanked by his two advisers.

The solid mass of giggling, tumultuous women standing about had learned our names—Gwace, Chollee—and shrieked them over and over, told us theirs. They begged us with engaging, teasing gestures and smiles to go back to the village with them. They wanted to know where we were going—grasping only that our home lay toward the sunset. It occurred to me how impossible it would be to tell them where we lived. They knew nothing of oceans or continents, knew even less of the things to which we were going back. What would they make of radios, television, talking movies, submarines, skyscrapers, psychoanalysis, Sunday supplements! Of those and similar things they knew and could conceive nothing. And yet how little, in a way, those things matter! Of the things that seem to matter most they know as much as we. Like us they regret that youth must go, like us seek friends that are true and kind, fear those who are false or cruel. They want what we want—love, health, happiness; dread, as we do, loneliness and disease. And they, as we do, hope for better things after death. In real essentials they resemble more than they differ from us. But that difference—the sum of man's effort on his own behalf—who can calculate its value?

The car moved forward slowly and the whole horde of women, shrieking in unison, followed. We gained speed and

they ran as fast as their handsome bare legs could carry them behind us, pink open mouths uttering one continuous howl of laughter and farewell. . . .

Pygmies are almost as much of a curiosity to natives who live in districts where there are none as they are to us. When passers-by along the road, pausing to salute the truck, beheld no less than eight of these small creatures wedged in among whites and baggage, drumming on their spears, singing and shaking their seed rattles, they stood rooted in amazement. In the native villages where we spent the night we always had a hut cleared for the use of the Pygmies, as they never mingled with the big people. The whole band slept happily in a place not more than eight or ten feet square, or, more often, round, with a smoldering camp fire in the middle and the door firmly closed. We bought their food, consisting of boiled plantains, sweet potatoes, manioc and peanut paste, from the natives; and it cost, I remember, about four and a half cents a day to feed eight Pygmies. And for the first time in their lives, I suppose, they knew what it was to have all the salt and tobacco they wanted.

Every night when they had eaten and smoked to their fill the dance began. Round and round the small interior of their hut they moved in close formation, shaking their rattles, singing the dance song, their strange, mobile faces and small brown bodies lighted by the leaping red flame. Heaven knows how long they kept it up. It was always going when we went to sleep. They were happy. They bought new loin cloths with the money we gave them, bound their foreheads with tin foil from our cigarette packages, and one persistently wore a brilliant Lucky Strike label in his little hat.

But it was when we were on safari that the Pygmies were

at their best. They passed in and out of the forest like shadows; never a branch cracked or a leaf rustled to betray their presence. They penetrated the thickest underbrush with perfect ease, returning with small dead animals or birds neatly pierced through the neck with a reed arrow, and ornamented themselves with fur and feathers, trophies of the chase. On the march they always carried their fire with them—a custom as ancient, I suppose, as their very ancient race. And in the villages of important chiefs the Pygmy chief was received as one ruler by another.

Courteous, gay, good sports, marvelous trackers, charming companions, the Pygmies remained with us for several weeks. Then, when our trail looped back over the highway running toward Rungu, we left them at a crossroads to wait for a passing cotton truck. A young Belgian cotton planter at this place agreed to look after them and see that they were properly expedited to Rungu, whence M. Fouat would return them to their leaf village beyond Tongolo's. What tales of us and of their journey would they tell by the little camp fires we had seen burning before those nestlike houses, to eager wives and to the inattentive ears of the old, old men?

Chapter 16

AN ENCHANTED VILLAGE

And now at last we had reached the principal goal of our journey—we were in the country of the Mangbetus. Everywhere we had been hearing of their beautiful villages, their superior culture. They are, we were assured, the most intelligent of all the Congo natives; they are artists; the position of their women is higher. Above all the Mangbetus were and have remained a race of aristocrats. They are intensely proud of their birth, breeding, tradition. They know their ancestry for fifty generations back, and each Mangbetu chief is aware of the lineage and pretensions of every other chief and precisely where to place him in the hierarchy of the race. Although they were cannibals (the men, that is; the women never ate human flesh), yet Mangbetu did not eat Mangbetu. He only ate slaves or natives of other tribes, as far beneath his royal self as animals, and therefore fair prey. Certain authorities state that they are not, properly speaking, a race at all, but a royal family. At any rate they are, I think, the least written-about—in English—and the least photographed people in Africa. I know of only one moving-picture having been made in their villages except ours—the French Citroën film.

From a Belgian official we carried a letter of introduction to the first of the three Mangbetu kings we were to visit, the

Sultani Ekibondo, and early one forenoon turned from the highway into a palm-bordered trail that led back into the forest. It was in the somnolent midday hour that we reached Ekibondo's village which, buried in green, spread away, it seemed, in every direction. The low round houses, wearing tall peaks of thatch, their white stucco walls beautifully decorated with black and henna designs, were scattered spaciously among groups of magnificent shade trees. Palm fronts glistened in the yellow sunlight, and thin fingers of smoke rose straight from tiny fires burning themselves out in front of the painted houses. The red earth was scrupulously swept. All was order and serenity. The village was as clean as a Dutch kitchen and as romantically laid out as a grand-opera setting. There was no sound or movement except the darting and chatter of tiny, brilliant birds. The village slept.

In the middle of the outer square was a reed bungalow perched on stilts built for the Crown Prince of the Belgians when he stayed in this village. There we waited while the interpreter was led away to Ekibondo's private quarters. Near by, the parked truck and touring-car stood out as incongruous in these dreamlike surroundings as horn-rimmed specs on the Venus de Milo.

Little by little bronze figures noiselessly congregated; men over six feet tall, carrying spears, switching away flies with buffalo tails and dressed in a single garment resembling the umbrella drawers of a by-gone day—only theirs was a much handsomer piece of lingerie. It was a black and white and henna colored loin cloth of pounded bark, flaring widely at the hips, drawn tight about the waist, the ends sticking up in a dashing frill above the belt. On their long, peaked heads reposed what looked like a child's work-basket upside down. We never got quite used, while we were in this region, to

THE HAIR IS WOUND OVER A FLEXIBLE FRAME

(*See page* 171)

A CONGO BEAUTY PARLOR

(*See page* 171)

seeing these fantastic beings unloading the trunks, boxes, kettles, and all the rest of the prosaic impedimenta from the trucks.

Women appeared, moving lightly and proudly across the square, throwing their shapely legs forward as they walked. The first thing you saw was a curious black halo that rose from their peaked heads, swaying a little as they walked; their beautiful eyes slanted upward toward the temples, their bodies were slim and hard, and they seemed amazingly well dressed in the little squares of black and henna bark cloth they wore hanging in front. Ornaments of shining brass and copper wire inclosed legs and arms, and the gleaming metal was cunningly suited to the polished bronze of their skin. And row on row their hair was drawn up and wound around an ever-widening frame till it formed the sculptural headdress, so like a black halo, and so smartly ornamented with long, sharpened bones. They had, in a perfection seldom seen, that mysterious thing called style, and their completeness must, you felt, have come down from an ancient and once perfect culture.

As the Mangbetus are great swells they are assiduously imitated. Chiefs who are not hereditary Mangbetus take Mangbetu women, a hundred or two each, if they can afford it, as wives. Plebeians bind their babies' heads with tightly woven fiber cords in the Mangbetu manner so that they will grow to that long, aristocratic point; and the girls' hair is trained over a frame to form the swaying Mangbetu halo. Throughout the Uele country you are constantly coming upon these imitators of the Mangbetus. Even Ekibondo himself (to be ostentatiously accurate) is not of the pure unadulterated Mangbetu blood—as were one or two royalties we visited later. He is nevertheless a proud and powerful chief, with seventy or eighty pure-bred Mangbetu wives, many subjects, and rich

plantations of cotton and manioc. Moreover, he is, the interpreter assured us, a much-traveled man, having "been to Rungu and to Dungu" and possessing a Ford.

And now, above the soft-voiced murmuring of the few onlookers who stared at us out of their luminous, slanting eyes, a new sound was heard, thin, shrill, a strain of minor music. A small procession appeared, preceded by a minstrel out of a Wagner opera, who wound a plaintive strain on a twisted horn of antelope. And who but Ekibondo himself was the bank president gravely saluting us with such a veiled, impersonal stare? A strongly built, yellowish gentleman with a small pointed beard, dressed in well-cut bush shirt, shorts, felt hat, green golf stockings, and English shoes. Behind him his minstrel played and a group of balloon-pantied attendants carrying rhino-hide whips lounged awaiting his orders.

The interpreter was obsequious: "Sultani Ekibondo, greet these great and important travelers who are not English."

"What are they?"

"They come from America."

Ekibondo's black eyes displayed all the response to this information of two blueberries swimming in skimmed milk.

What, we brightly asked him, did he think of America?

"If you will tell me what it is, I will tell you what I think of it."

The interpreter hastily changed the subject. It was a question, he said, of making a moving-picture. The Sultani knew, the interpreter reminded him, what that was. He even turned an imaginary crank, which seemed to annoy Ekibondo: "These gentlemen [the ladies were ignored] are chiefs in their country. They are rich, powerful, famous." I noticed that our males, while they laughed it off, were not actually displeased by these flamboyant introductions. We had never, the interpreter went

on, seen a chief's dance and had come hoping to photograph the Sultani dancing with his wives.

With a barely perceptible movement of the hand Ekibondo summoned first one attendant and then another. They approached, bowing low, received his orders, and fled away to do his bidding, one to the top of a small hill where, under a thatched pavilion, stood the huge, squat drum. It looked like a fat, short-legged animal. The drummer began sending out his message.

"What does it say?"

"That great men have come from a country far away. Chiefs. It summons the musicians and the dancers, tells them they will receive gifts and drink palm wine."

The village came to life. More and more slender, haloed women stepped out of their low doorways, carrying small ebony stools and wearing little woven mats hanging behind which served as a part of their scant attire when they stood up and as a little cushion when they sat down. Adorable children, naked, with long peaked heads, appeared. The drums never stopped sending out the Sultani's commands. Ekibondo himself retired, and it was not until we had finished our hasty luncheon that he reappeared—transformed.

Once more we heard the Panlike plaint of the antelope horn, and this time it heralded the return of Ekibondo with a portion of the royal family. Gone now were the bush skirt and golf stockings! Here was a Mangbetu king in all his splendor! He was naked except for the flaring loin cloth bound by an okapi-skin belt. A spreading crest of scarlet feathers nodded from his head; a shower of leopard's tails tufted with red feathers dragged on the ground. He wore necklaces of teeth and carved ivory-handled knives were thrust through his belt.

Behind him walked his mother and chief wife, both slender

women with long, slant-eyed, aristocratic faces. In the bearing of all three were impeccable dignity and the self-assurance characteristic of hereditary princes anywhere in the world. A slave half crawled up the steps to place Ekibondo's steamer chair, their women handed the two royal ladies each a carved, black stool. The minstrel stood below, playing his little horn, and courtiers lounged about. Ekibondo's eye, regal and indifferent, roamed the table as if with a special object.

"Have you got any gin?" whispered the interpreter.

We had, and Ekibondo and the ladies deigned to partake of all that was offered—an attendant holding the Sultani's cup when he was not drinking. His wife seemed chiefly interested in a small yellow dog that shivered beside her. From time to time a servant put a leaf into her hand with which she carefully wiped its eyes. The mother, magnificent in her own headdress of red feathers, sat in a pose of exceeding nonchalance, a cigarette we had given her stuck through the middle part of her ear.

The chief now presented us with gifts—a little drum, knives, his own elephant-hair bracelet strung with the bones of a special totem animal. I was so overcome by his costume, his crouching slaves reverently arranging his leopard tails, his distinguished female relatives, and the bracelet he gave me, that I pulled off my wrist-watch and begged him to accept it. The royal family drank a little more gin and then rose, the queen refusing to depart until we gave her an empty pickle bottle.

We were invited to make a tour of the beautiful village. Palm-arched lanes or tunnels cut through bamboo groves led to little groups of painted houses set in their operatic background. Rustic bridges spanned brooks which murmured under drooping ferns. There were various little pavilions—thatched roofs supported by carved pillars; some of them were

granaries, others community kitchens or workshops of various kinds; the chicken-coops were little temples set on high, carved logs. Every object you looked at had the warm irregularity and beauty, the special quality, of things made by hand. In these beautiful open-air workshops women were in a leisurely way carrying on their occupations—cooking, pounding bark to make cloth, weaving baskets, painting patterns on each other's bodies with fine brushes dipped in black gardenia sap, or arranging each other's hair. In a sunny, shadowy pool a half dozen wives splashed and scrubbed their polished bodies, looking in their black haloes as if they had got into the bath with their hats on. There were very young babies whose heads, in process of elongation, were tightly wound with fiber cords. I think their heads must have been very sore, as they shrank back if you put out your hand, and occasionally one of them cried—a crying baby being an almost unheard-of thing in the Congo. This distortion of the skull seems to have, if anything, a beneficial effect on the brain, since the Mangbetus are said to be the most intelligent of all the Congolese peoples. Accompanied by the court and the minstrel playing, I crossed a little bridge and followed a green-canopied path to the seraglio of the favorite wives—a ring of little painted houses hidden from view in a retreat of extraordinary beauty. On this excursion the men of the party were not permitted.

The largest of these was the house of the chief wife. She invited me to go in. I had to bend almost double to pass beneath the drooping thatch and enter the low doorway. At first it seemed quite dark inside, but I soon became accustomed to the dim twilight—there were no windows, but a little light filtered between roof and walls. In the house there was almost nothing; several low, handmade native beds, devoid, of course, of covers; a few hand-carved stools and chests, some earthen

pots. The floor was hard, well-swept dirt with the blackened stones of a rude hearth in the center. The roof went up and up to the high peak, the grass thatching tied to crooked poles. The only use these people have for a house is as a place in which to sleep, and they seem to sleep very little. They rise at dawn, eat and work in their open-air pavilions, lie about small fires after dark, talking, endlessly talking or, when the moon is full, dance all night. And that outdoor life seems to be lived with an amazing minimum of material impedimenta. You never see them eat; there never seems to be anything to throw away. Their belongings they wear—the tiny apron of bark cloth, the little woven mat behind, the copper ornaments. They live with a strange perfection of neatness and temperateness. The rarest sight in the Congo is a fat native woman—I never saw, with the exception of white men's companions, but one.

We were notified that the festivities had been prepared and that Ekibondo awaited us. From every side the people had been assembling; down all the shady paths came the slim brown women carrying their little stools and the men holding totem and fetich skins. The dance was to take place in a large pavilion, a forest of beautifully carved columns supporting an overhanging thatch. There was the occasional rat-tat-tat of a signal drum still sending out orders, and also the mad symphony of the dance drums beating in complicated counter tempo against each other, rising to a frenzied pitch as we approached.

When we went from the white glare of sunlight into shady coolness under the low-eaved roof, we stepped out of the twentieth century into an ancient world of which, it seems, history has no record. Ekibondo sat on a low throne in the

middle of a wide platform, a slave lying on the ground behind him. Back of him were his mother and chief wife, and back of these, in what was evidently traditional order, twenty or thirty of the other wives sat on their little stools, their long slender legs in gleaming ornaments stretched before them. Just below the platform, facing Ekibondo, sat the loveliest of all these slant-eyed women, the favorite, we were told, of the day. Etiquette demanded that she sit in just this place, facing the chief and below him, where he can always look at her, and that she, the only one of all the women, be occupied in weaving a little mat.

Below along one side of the pavilion were the rest of the wives and female slaves; on the other side the relatively few men courtiers who occupy a chief's village, and the orchestra. The instruments were drums, cymbals, and seed rattles, but chiefly drums; round squat drums, long narrow drums, flat wooden drums like the folded halves of huge oyster shells, drums beaten with sticks, with the palms of the hands. . . .

Ekibondo faintly recognized our arrival. Then his mother rose. She descended from the platform with slender grace and dignity and began to dance as a person dances who has been trained to it from babyhood. The steps were complicated and symbolic and performed with professional perfection and nonchalance. During the dance a naked runner came with a message for the Sultani, flinging himself at his feet to deliver it, only to be waved haughtily away.

The mother's dance ended and the music stopped. Ekibondo burst into a loud chant which was taken up at intervals by the rest, so true and sonorous it seemed as if it would raise the roof from its carved pillars. When the song ended the Sultani himself sprang to his feet, the slaves ardently arranging his loin cloth and leopard tails. Then, as the drums and cymbals

crashed into action, Ekibondo straddled down from the platform—legs wide apart, head up, nostrils flaring, superbly histrionic. He leapt into the middle of the floor and began to dance. Nothing more barbaric and perfectly performed could be imagined. An old man waving a rattle and a wand walked backward in front of him, clearing the air of evil spirits. Frantically the old witch-doctor danced, frequently bending forward to pick up minute twigs or stones that might lie in the path of the king. As the music and the dance became more frenzied, the sorcerer threw himself on the ground, tearing at little roots with claws and teeth. Four of the wives followed Ekibondo about the dance-floor or stood grouped in certain positions behind him. On their little stools the other wives rocked from side to side, a hundred pairs of slim brown hands fluttering up and down in the conventional gesture of invitation toward their slim bodies, swaying an accompaniment to the dance.

Ekibondo's dance tells a story—but what? There are warrior gestures, gestures of hunting, of love, of conquest. The interpreter is useless. Even if Ekibondo's people were to tell him the meaning of the dance it would probably not be the truth, so jealously do the Congo natives guard the secrets of their tradition.

The frenzy of the dance, the ecstasy of the wildly swaying women, mounted to fever pitch and then ended abruptly; the orchestra crashed to a close with drummers' hands suspended in mid-air. The wives stationed on the dance-floor led the chief back to his throne and stood there fanning him.

There was a period of throbbing silence. Then the head wife took her place on the floor. She danced a slinking, languorous dance. One by one the other women rose and joined her, and soon a long row of slim bodies and swaying

headdresses advanced in close formation around the great space, each making a gesture of surrender as she passed her lord. It was evident that the program was proceeding in traditional order.

But alas, the camera people had been getting restless. "Get 'em out of here. Move 'em all out into the light. We can't do anything in here." And so our glimpse into a past long gone ended abruptly.

Outside in the blazing heat, rearranged according to photographic rules instead of an ancient ritual, the whole thing collapsed. The women slouched and giggled on their stools. The favorite abandoned her weaving and took her child on her knees. Ekibondo was bored. When they attempted to repeat the women's dance, our director of the day shouted, "Get the old ones out of it. Put out the milk-cows, the American audiences like 'em young and pretty."

So the high priestesses of the art were removed and he chose a half dozen young girls, probably slaves, who had no traditional part in the ceremony and couldn't dance. They moved about in an agony of shame, blasted with ridicule by the great ladies. By this time the palm wine had arrived, and all were dipping into the great jugs quite freely with their gourds or enamel cups. The royal consort, looking at the awkward chambermaids, went into a laughing jag. Even the common people, who had gathered from other villages and had stood in crowds about the pavilion looking in, laughed at this outdoor fiasco, picked up their earthen jars and baskets of cotton, and strolled away.

We too left before the other perfect scene should be effaced from our minds. As we walked back to the *gîte* we passed an ugly tin-roofed shed, the only unlovely thing in the village. Under it sat the chief's oldest son with two secretaries, grad-

uates, I suppose, of a Marist school. They were all dressed in duck trousers and were supervising the weighing of cotton and writing things in ledgers.

When a chief dies his village is always destroyed, and the court moves to the village of his heir. It is easy to imagine what will become of that fragment of an antique and beautiful tradition we had just seen when this businesslike young man comes into his own.

Chapter 17

A ROYAL COMEDIAN

The automobile road ended abruptly. Beyond, deep in the forest, was the court of Madangba, a richer and more powerful potentate than Ekibondo, and of pure Mangbetu descent. We were deposited in a crumbling *gîte,* the truck rumbled away, and an infuriating wait for porters began. The local chief was ill and had withdrawn with his sorcerers and a wife or two to a hut hidden in the forest to recuperate or die. The deputy chief was evidently afraid of his subjects and dared not command them to carry our loads—an occupation they detest. But with patience and bribery we finally assembled enough men to take us and a part of our goods into Madangba's country.

The long line of the safari wound through the forest over an old, old trail, the clay of which was, it seemed, molded to a special texture by centuries of pattering bare feet. The jungle intertwined above our heads; rustic bamboo sidewalks suspended on woven vines hung over swamps and over elephant wallows deserted so recently by the elephants that the water still glistened on the underbrush. Occasionally a tall native stepped out of the bush to ask us to turn aside to some village newly wrecked by elephants and shoot the raiders. Besides the great pad-prints of the elephants, the trail was patterned with the tracks of wild pig, buffalo, and leopards. Monkeys

swung from tree top to tree top, swarmed along wildly swaying branches, or stood with long tails looped up over their backs, peering down at us. They are the most aërial of all animals, and their long, falling leaps give one a dizzy sense of flying, entirely absent from flying itself. Our boys with their shoes over their shoulders trudged mournfully, dazed by the calamity which had snatched them from the tops of motor busses and set them walking like mere bush boys for Heaven knew what incalculable distances.

In mid-afternoon of the second day the trail left the forest and became a tunnel through scorched elephant grass higher than your head. Suddenly two naked black soldiers stepped out of the grass, carrying muzzle-loading guns and a bugle, and placed themselves at the head of our line. A little farther on they drew up at attention, the safari halted, the bugle blew furiously, and a huge pale-bronze gentleman appeared at the head of a small army of ten naked soldiers carrying similar antiquated weapons and a Belgian flag. This was the King Madangba. He wore a black business jacket over a *décolletage* reaching to his white cotton loin cloth, a huge charm around his neck, and a sweaty fez surmounted by a pith helmet. His two front teeth were missing, and he had elephantiasis in one foot. Salutations were exchanged while he stared out of glazed, attentive eyes. Then the bugle blew again, a swinging chair was lowered, Madangba was scooped up into it, and the whole procession moved forward through the chief's cotton fields and among beautiful coffee trees loaded with fragrant white flowers.

Madangba's village was only a shade less enchanting than Ekibondo's—the same low painted houses, parklike arrangement of palms and shade trees, haloed women walking in shady sunlight. The king promptly seated himself on the

veranda of our *gîte,* laughing sardonically while we argued with howling porters who demanded twice as much money as we had agreed to pay. He seemed to make a point of showing that he thought us fools. But he was gratified at the prospect of performing for the cinema and soon withdrew to prepare for the dance.

Madangba's wives numbered, I think, something over a hundred. These vast harems are of course the scene of constant intrigue, political and amorous. The women all struggle for power and favor and often gain a great ascendancy over the chief—the sensuality and laziness of the Mangbetus making them particularly susceptible to that kind of influence. Nor does the presence of the king's mother among all these women make for sweetness and light. But most of the wives are little better than slaves and subject at all times to the strictest surveillance. I remember one occasion when our interpreter, who was a white man, beckoned one of the wives out of the huge circle which was dancing before us. Most unwillingly she came. It was a question of having wood and water brought for our kitchen, and together she and the interpreter disappeared in the rear of the gate. Immediately a sense of drama, even of disaster, spread among the dancers. Brilliant eyes rolled fearfully, the women whispered, lost step, looked uneasily at the chief sitting morosely on his throne. Hardly a moment had passed, the interpreter told us afterward, before the mother, the chief wife, and a man with a rhino whip turned up to see what he was doing with one of the queens.

Naturally the sight of these hundreds of wives evoked the formidable vision of hundreds of mothers-in-law. But the mother-in-law problem, does not, we learned, exist in the Congo. Conveniently a rigid tabu has grown up which forbids a Congolese gentleman ever to see or speak to his mother-

in-law or even meet her face to face on a trail. Apparently self-preservation has as much to do with etiquette as with all other human development.

It was a radiant day, a cool breeze stirred the palms, the air was fragrant and full of the songs of birds. In the center of the village was a gracefully shaded, sunlit open space flanked by the tribunal—a large raised platform sheltered by a thatched roof. Here a throne-like bed was set out for Madangba. Before it lay an immense, flat, beautifully woven basket, and in that was a small ebony stool. Below, in a vast semicircle, the wives were seated, awaiting his arrival. The green tapestry of the forest hung close about the village.

N'Dule, the oldest son of Madangba and his heir, had come with his suite from his own near-by village. Surrounded by his attendants, his handsome, almost naked bronze body stretched in a steamer chair, he too waited, or occasionally danced a preliminary dance to which his father's wives chanted a most enthusiastic accompaniment. Their evident predilection for the young prince turned, however, to a diplomatic assumption of indifference when the king himself arrived. At Madangba's death these women would, we were told, all belong to the young man, with the exception of a few who would fall to powerful uncles.

At last the roll of drums was heard, the orchestra approached, playing as it marched, the women wildly waved their hands and screamed. A surprising feeling of excitement filled us—the king Madangba was coming. Incredible, he swaggered into the picture naked but for his great billowing loin cloth, blazing with scarlet feathers, his chest covered with saffron powder, bunches of green leaves and the skin of totem animals stuffed into his belt. He greeted us with fantastic ges-

tures, inspired perhaps by the moving-picture camera. Then slaves came running with the flat basket and inside of that, sometimes on top of his little stool, this fat, oldish man with a swollen foot did the most agile of dances. The crown prince always remained standing while his father performed, keeping his eyes respectfully upon the king. When the dance was over Madangba tossed handfuls of silver in the air, and as the whole court precipitated itself to scramble for it he laughed that same arrogant laugh with which he had derided us.

Between his own performances Madangba mounted to the platform and sat on his throne, legs apart, feet in his basket. Women fanned him, and he stared indifferently at the great circle of wives who had risen and moved round and round chanting, bare knees bending and thrown forward, bare, gleaming shoulders back, elbows pointed in strange, futuristic angles. Soft-eyed little boys with hawk's bells around their ankles—the baby sons of the king—danced beside their mothers, mimicking to perfection the semi-obscene movements. Big drums boomed, little drums rolling their staccato chatter pulsed and throbbed back of the reiterated chant, created a web of rhythm in which all were caught, a tangible thing in which they moved, volitionless as it were, and entranced. To listen to it or at any rate to resist it was a kind of madness. With cracking nerves we went back to the *gîte,* only to find we could not escape that insistent, breathless music.

Nor could Madangba relinquish his audience. It was evident he considered himself a comedian, and with his soldiers carrying their muzzle-loaders and the flag, he would charge our veranda at top speed. The attacking party would bring up short, kneel, take aim, pretend to shoot, then rise and gallop away. He raced, too, across the square, bringing us gifts, his fat, naked chief wife and elderly prime minister tearing after

him. The gifts were placed on the table and then they would all gallop back to his pavilion.

Constantly he sent his cup-bearer to us, asking for something to drink. We mixed anything we happened to have on the table, canned pear-juice, maple syrup, vinegar, and sugar—dreadful messes which he doubtless believed to be some particularly potent foreign brew. He caused too, great jars of palm wine to be brought for himself and his wives. The dance became an orgy. Madangba himself was drunk. He charged about among his queens, roughly caressing, slapping, pulling them to their feet, pushing them back on to their little stools. Playfully he all but strangled one. But there was something childish about it. He was at all times more concerned with himself than with them. Incurably he was showing off, although the camera was no longer in action and I was the only onlooker, peeping surreptitiously from behind a clump of bamboos.

The entertainment lasted all day and the uproar had become just about unbearable when at last we saw Madangba being escorted to his quarters. He was preceded by his soldiers and the bearers of his spear and shield, the four chief wives holding him up by his loin cloth, the musicians playing as they marched behind.

Peace descended on the village. In the twilight slender forms could be seen under the pavilions, cooking over small fires, grinding things, sorting herbs. Again I failed to discover what these people ate or where, or how they disposed of the refuse. Never a bone or a husk was seen lying about these immaculate villages. We walked among the painted houses trying to understand what was being done, but all we gained was a feeling of searching peace and of knowing nothing at all about

THE KING AND QUEENS

(*See page* 195)

MADANGBA

what surrounded us, about these arrow-bodied, soft-eyed people, moving, it seemed, in an inexplicable twilit dream.

Night came swiftly, bringing darkness and the familiar crowding close of the great forest. All the little, big-eared dogs were carried inside the houses to keep them from the leopards, which are particularly numerous at this place, and special care was taken that the lanterns placed at our open doors should be well trimmed and full.

Next day when the sun rose, gilding the wisps of white mist that hung about the village, a dozen women prisoners, watched over by a man with a whip, bent low over the red earth, sweeping the village with short, witchlike brooms. After breakfast Madangba and his stout wife, accompanied by several servants, seated themselves on our veranda. An attendant stationed herself behind the king, holding a snuffbox and several ears of corn. One by one Madangba ate from the ears of corn, the slave bending forward from time to time to pick stray kernels out of the corner of his mouth or brush them off his breast. Presently, with a wave of his hand, he summoned a male attendant who flung himself on the ground and began massaging the royal feet, undone, perhaps, from such undue activity the previous day. More presents were brought us, and we in return gave Madangba a leather belt, gold cuff links, money; also beads and trinkets to his wife. He fingered my green-lined umbrella with ill-concealed lust and laughed a great deal, incomprehensibly, keeping up his character of comedian, I suppose, to the end.

Chapter 18

A JUVENILE COURT

THE most idyllic week we spent in the Congo was passed at the prince N'Dule's dreamlike village—a small clearing in the depths of the tall forest where the extravagant sun seemed to shine more temperately and cooler breezes played among the many-patterned leaves of the hovering jungle. N'Dule himself was a most blithe and beautiful young man. Some day, if the government favors the succession, he will have all Madangba's lands, wives, and power, and in the meantime he lies all day on a steamer chair and indolently waits.

I have found a letter written while we were visiting at this juvenile court. But we did not for many weeks reach a place where letters could be mailed, and when we did, life among Congo natives had become so much of a commonplace that it did not, at the time, seem worth sending. Now the perspective of time and place gives it, perhaps, a certain interest:

It is very late and I am writing on the veranda of our *gîte*. The moonlight is silvery-gray on the thatched roofs and on all the jungle leaves—round and heart-shaped and long, sword-like leaves, leaves big as elephant's ears or tiny as little hands. There is such a chorus of insects that the air is a shimmer of tremolo sounds. Elephants are feeding near by. We went out

to see them, but they were in a swamp full of tall grass, and it became so dangerous there in the dark that we fired into the air to drive the great gray shadows away. Making almost no sound, they slipped off as softly and swiftly through the dense growth as if they really had been shadows.

Every morning N'Dule, accompanied by his elderly prime minister, his brother, a few servants, and his chief wife, comes to pay his respects. He leaps on to the veranda—all his movements as well as his costume seem to be taken out of a Russian ballet—and shakes hands with each of us. Then he sticks two fingers in his mouth, indicating that he would like cigarettes. When these are received, he scans the breakfast table—he always arrives just after we have finished, as it is not good form to watch other people eat—hoping to see there a bottle, preferably of gin. There is none, and we offer him coffee, which he very much dislikes.

Then, having learned that we do not like to have him and his court installed beside our veranda, N'Dule withdraws with his *cortège* to a shady knoll commanding a good view of our camp. There steamer chairs are deployed under the trees or green leaves spread on the ground and the men recline all day, brushing away flies and staring down at us. But they are not entirely idle. N'Dule is thinking up things he wants to ask for, and presently a courtier arrives, bearing a slip of paper previously borrowed from us. On this something is inscribed in Kingwana, written by one of N'Dule's ragged soldiers—the only person in the village who can read or write. It is handed to me. Why I am expected to read Kingwana when I cannot speak it, I do not know. It is a request for a shirt. I have no shirt and send the man back to say so. Presently another request comes, this time for a pair of boots; then another for a dress for N'Dule's wife, another for more cigarettes, for my

typewriter. These missives are delivered to me because in the beginning, irresistibly impelled to increase the rare sum of contentment this young chief seemed to possess, I gave him everything I could spare.

Today N'Dule in person accompanied the bearer of the letter. He leaned gracefully against the crooked log that supports the thatched roof of the *gîte,* his immense, brilliant eyes prying into every corner. He saw red bedroom slippers beside a cot and wanted those; a bottle of cologne and wanted that, indicating by gestures that he knew it smelled good. I conveyed to him that if he would bring a receptacle I would give him some. Royal advisers and soldiers flew off in every direction to find a bottle and N'Dule sank into the chaise longue which is always carried behind him when he moves. He waited; I typed; the palms and bananas softly rustled. A crowd of N'Dule's subjects stood massed about the veranda, naked, quiet, staring with round eyes at me and taking in every detail of the little that was going on. They made no disturbance, were as good as children told to behave nicely under pain of being sent away. Occasionally they murmured to each other in low whispers, usually about the typewriter, the click-click of which sounded startlingly loud. Every time the little bell rang they gave a low, happy grunt. Sometimes I let them press the keys, which they did with startled eyes and a giggle in which there was already an overtone of the hysterical howl they would emit if, as they expected, the demon in the machine showed signs of leaping out at them.

I do not know why it is so often the custom either to write of "natives" jocosely, in the tone of a newspaper headline or a movie subtitle, or else in ponderous scientific fashion, as if they were mere zoölogical specimens, and so seldom in the familiar and yet respectful tone with which so-called civilized

people are discussed. Natives, to be sure, who have been bullied by whites, who have observed our free and easy manners and imitated, in their total misunderstanding, only what is worst in us, are, like our Kinshasa boys, pretty apt to be a bad joke. But the bush native, especially the highly developed Mangbetu, is himself a dignified human being, occupying his own particular place in the human hierarchy.

Away from civilization, especially in the Mangbetu country, good manners are universal. Never did we see the people fight among themselves. There was no rowdy behavior, no back-slapping, loud talk, indecorous familiarity between men and women—the latter, in fact, are circumspect to the last degree in their behavior. Mangbetu women are ladies. Tabus and etiquette govern every move and word and gesture. I do not know why some psychologists say that we acquire, as we mount upward from primitive states, more and more repressions or restraints. If the African natives or the American Indians are primitive peoples, the theory is flatly untrue. Our own lack of restraint in manners, morals, behavior, and beliefs is fantastically greater than that of primitives, who are regulated down to the minutest detail. If they often go to great lengths of excess in the dance, it is, we must remember, within the strict etiquette prescribed for excess!

And what can one not say of the kindness of these people to children! Never from one coast of Africa to another did we see a child abused or hear one spoken to crossly. They are not disciplined, but then they seem to be children who do not need discipline! They are never impertinent or disagreeable. Their manners are as perfect as are their parents'. They are gentle, friendly, gay—not boisterously joyous, but, as it were, dreamily preoccupied with the pleasant business of being alive.

One evening as we were entering the Mangbetu country the

truck broke down. I sat by the roadside and soon a dozen ten- or twelve-year-old boys with long peaked heads clustered about. "Madama? Madama?" they inquired in their soft voices, looking at my semi-male attire doubtfully. Whispering among themselves, they came closer to examine trinkets I held out, their slim naked bodies leaning confidingly but politely against me. A sentimental waltz tune had run through my head all day and unconsciously I hummed it. They listened attentively and then carefully and earnestly sang the tune, with its unaccustomed intervals so unlike their own unsentimental music, in flawlessly true pitch. There was a gentleness, a lovable quality, about them and about all Congolese children, unlike anything I have ever seen. Imagine a group of hoodlum boys picked up along a road in any civilized country! Perhaps it is this innate amiability that has made these races the victims down all the centuries, of the aggressive, rawer peoples. If so, it seems a pity that rapacity and force must always attend the forward-moving races on their pilgrimage toward—what?

All day Tongolo's son, who came with us from the Pygmy country, has kept me company, sitting on the floor of the *gîte,* looking at pictures in an advertising pamphlet. He has apparently never seen pictures before, and he supposes the whites portrayed there must be we. One by one he tries to identify us, but he is much troubled by the presence of a white child. He has seen no white child with us. Young Tongolo is an extremely polite young man with a long head, fashionably peaked, and has proved to be an excellent guardian for the Pygmies. We asked him how old he was, and after long, hard thought he said he was ten, and that his pretty young wife Bamba whom he left at Rungu was four, which shows how little these people know of what we call years or age. This young man was very fortunate to have obtained so young and

pretty a girl as Bamba for his first wife. Usually a boy cannot afford to buy a wife, and his father presents him with an old cast-off wife of his own. When the youth is able to buy a better one the old woman is sent off to work in the fields or becomes a servant. And often, too, quite old men add girls who are little more than children to their harems. At first Tongolo, sitting on the floor beside us, would talk a great deal about going away with us, to Le Putu, to Francia, of which he knows, and then beyond, *quite* beyond—snapping his fingers in a gesture which seems to emphasize immeasurably any statement—quite beyond to the mysterious place we came from, beyond all the seas and under the sunset. But when we reached the parting-place he was desperately eager to get back to Bamba and his home.

In the afternoon the photographing party, which had been filming Pygmies on the trail of an elephant, returned. They had come suddenly on the bull elephant and Charlie had shot it in the forehead. But it slid away before any one could place another shot. I am glad it was hit in the forehead, from which the small bullet would rebound as lightly as a tennis ball, and not in a place where the lead could penetrate. It is bad enough to *kill* animals, but a happy jungle life turned into one long torment from an incurable and festering wound is too bad to contemplate.

During the day the most appalling uproar broke out in the bush behind the cook-house. Gabriel was nearly killing Kole. Every one rushed to separate them; the villagers standing about were amazed at the indecency of the scene. Gabriel, with a look of incredible mischievousness, declared that he found Kole lying on his, Gabriel's, mattress with a woman, and that he, a mission boy, trained to work in the families of respectable whites, was offended in every one of his delicate sensibilities.

Kole, probably falsely accused, with a rapidly swelling eye, and aware of Gabriel's own peccadilloes with women, was absolutely speechless before such a revelation of malice and hypocrisy.

Kole is a strange creature, biologically more remote from us than any of the others. Sometimes he refuses to obey some trifling order with a finality only to be attributed to a tribal tabu of which he will not speak. His rages, sorrows, preferences, remained incomprehensible to us to the end. Gabriel, on the other hand, with his black fedora hat mended with a safety pin perched on one side, his mouth, his hands, his pockets full of food, following us about, breathing down our necks, offering gratuitous advice, begging, full of bumptiousness and trickery and a queer mischievous humor, was the most like us of all our retinue.

Toward sunset we heard the sound of drums and saw N'Dule with all his women and his court approaching—a rather shabby outfit, but glorified by the beauty and youth of the young chief. He was giving a dance as similar as possible to his father's splendid ceremonies. But the women were not handsome, the orchestra not adequate, the courtiers not skillful. N'Dule himself danced superbly. And after each dance he would leap up to our veranda, shake hands, demand plaudits, cigarettes, and look hopefully for gin. He was as gay and excited as a young collegian at home giving a party, and finally departed with his arm around the shoulders of his youngest wife. It was a pathetic effort compared to the splendid ceremonies of the older chiefs but more engaging, as N'Dule himself was more engaging than the older Mangbetus, who are so heavily sensual, so sated.

Chapter 19

THE SADDEST OF THE MANGBETUS

"Ay, in the very temple of delight,
Veil'd melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can press Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall know the sadness of her might
And be among her cloudy trophies hung."

"Of the peoples conquered by the Mangbetus," said the Dominican Bishop, "some were hunters and warriors, others husbandmen, others workers in wood and ivory; but the Mangbetus themselves were *les jouisseurs*"—a lovely word spoiled by its literal translation, "enjoyers," and not adequately expressed by "seekers for pleasure," for it indicates that they not only sought but found pleasure and lived for it alone. And we have all, in our time, witnessed the dire state of affairs produced by exclusive devotion to that particular pursuit. All of which is merely to introduce into your presence Niapu, a sad, proud, incomprehensible person—artist, patriot, lover of beautiful women, and slave of one of the dark ministers of bliss and torment, the opium of Africa.

The sky was a uniform, luminous gray, the forest very black,

and the blue smoke from the village fires drifted toward it thinly. Niapu was not expecting us. He lay on his bed of state under a great pavilion, dressed in native style. Never did we see Niapu wearing any European ornament or article of dress. Thirty or forty of his wives were seated about him on low stools in the positions etiquette demands. Beside him on a mat were his bow and arrows and his spear; his musicians lounged near by, and a cool breeze blew languidly under the thatched roof held up on carved pillars.

Niapu is not only of the purest Mangbetu blood, but he is also the son of a great rebel chief who would not accept white domination and was some years ago deposed by an able, handsome, and exceedingly ambitious official (this personage himself described to me the pompous scene), and sent away into exile. Niapu succeeded his father, succeeded also to his father's hatred of whites and white rule, to his father's love of his own race and tradition; and will, I imagine, succeed also to his fate.

"Niapu does not please me," a local dignitary told me irritably. "He's a debauched sensualist like all the Mangbetus —thinks of nothing but women and drink and hemp. And he's surly too, and rebellious. Lacking in proper respect." So saying, the nervous, thin-legged, sallow young deputy of empire lighted another cigarette and poured himself another brandy sundowner in a small glow of righteousness and sense of power, and that night his warm-eyed black mistress undoubtedly brought him the latest underground gossip from the court of Niapu.

The pavilion where Niapu took his ease was crumbling; the *gîte*—all important chiefs must build and maintain a rest-house to shelter the white tax-collector when he makes his yearly visit—was in disrepair. Niapu was not glad to see us.

He did not want to speak to or look at us; his intelligent, weary face never relaxed to the slightest pretense of affability. But we had official letters, and this king in bondage felt compelled to do the things we requested; namely, to dance for the camera and to command an exhibition of magic by the royal sorcerer which we might photograph.

When legal procedure becomes too involved and the light of justice too obscure for the indolent eyes of the Congo kings to see by, the official sorcerer is called in and solves the problem without difficulty. But as these people guard most jealously the secrets of their superstitious practices and as the very existence of sorcerers is now forbidden by Belgian law, this demand of ours met with particular disfavor. We waited and Niapu waited. But his indifference to almost everything was as profound, I fancy, as his patience was slight, and he gave in first.

In the silvery stillness of late afternoon an old man was brought to us. He was an enchanting old man, thin almost to transparency, with hollowed-out ears and wild and wily eyes that glanced and slid and saw everything with the baffling appearance of looking at nothing. The court had been assembled, but now most of the women withdrew. Niapu, with a look of suffering ennui, turned his face away from the spectacle. The male courtiers, lounging in reclining-chairs, switched their bare legs with buffalo tails, obviously bored because this ceremony, usually so vital to them, was a pretense. The orchestra was mute.

Moving lightly and delicately, the frail old man planted two high crotched sticks upright in the ground and laid across them a bamboo pole. Then with exquisite care he balanced along the pole little pyramids of smooth round sticks, three in a pile. Nothing could exceed the deliberateness of his move-

ments. The photographer, with his cap hind side before, stood behind the camera, casting anxious glances at the sky. "Say, Bo," Charlie remarked earnestly in English to some bystander who didn't even know the English language existed, "tell that bird to hurry up, see? Light going, sun down, no good, quick," accompanying these cryptic phrases with gestures. Charlie addressed all natives in English in a very soft voice, omitting verbs and accompanied by pantomime, a method so successful that we who spoke French and pored over Swahili vocabularies never succeeded half so well in making ourselves understood.

But how are you going to hurry up magic? The old man went on as before, skipping nimbly about, whispering, mumbling his toothless gums, shaking his lean forefinger at the sticks, urging them to obey; crooning a little chant. Ordinarily a very serious decision, life and death, perhaps, would hang on the outcome of this ceremony. If the little pyramids of sticks toppled off one side of the pole the accused was guilty, if they toppled off the other he was innocent. But today the sticks, knowing (we were assured) that the whole thing was a fake, were recalcitrant. Stubbornly they refused to move.

Frantically the picture people watched the sun sinking behind the transparent ceiling of mist. They were particularly anxious to shoot this scene as it was to be worked into the scenario at the place where a native is judged, condemned, buried alive, and rescued just in the nick of time by the lady members of the expedition. One of them suggested tying a thread around one of the upright poles and making the little sticks topple off by pulling the string. But some of us were anxious to let magic have its way and protested.

Still the old man whispered and sang, withdrawing farther and farther from the pole. Then, turning, he faced the sticks

in silence. Suddenly they were seen to move, then toppled and fell, just how or why I do not know. Still watchful and wily, the old man wrapped the impedimenta of his craft in a piece of pounded bark cloth, accepted a gratuity, and withdrew.

Niapu's wives numbered about a hundred and eighty, and among them were no old or ugly women. All who had lost youth or figure, with the exception of the chief wife, were sent away to work in the fields. In no other Mangbetu court was the etiquette so finished as here. These women were as well trained in singing, dancing, and the art of pleasing their lord as the geishas of Japan. They must always be gay, enthusiastic, and reverent of him; must listen when he talked, laugh if and when he made a joke. And yet what weight of boredom lay on him! He looked at times as if he hated them, as if the possession of a hundred and eighty slender, haloed, Egyptian-eyed wives was merely a hundred and eighty times more of a bore than most men find the possession of one to be. What, if anything, did he want, this weary, sated lord? Only one comprehensible emotion seemed to move him—his loathing of his white conquerors.

Neither Niapu nor his wives understood what country we belonged to. Did we come, the women asked the interpreter, from Le Putu—their word for Europe? He told them no, that we came from a country they knew nothing of, which lay in the direction of the setting sun. And were Alice and I really women? Wives of Belgian officials do not as a rule wear knickerbockers, and all the court, including Niapu himself—who, incidentally, looked at us with anything but admiration—thought we were men.

It was the day before that set for our departure. On a falling cadence, over and over again, the descending refrain of

the dance-song was loudly intoned. Drums beat furiously, rattles hissed, a woman strangely costumed shook a tall pole covered with silver bells. A hundred and eighty wives moved round and round the circle or swayed in ecstasy on their little stools when Niapu danced before them. Half crouching, passing back and forth before the seated women, moved the master of ceremonies—a figure out of the Arabian Nights. He walked swiftly, bent forward close to the women, shaking his rattle, exhorting them to sway with even greater frenzy, to flutter their butterfly hands even more ardently. And Niapu's short dances were as perfect in pantomime and rhythmic form, as beautifully performed, as those of any ballet star in Europe. Not one but several medicine-men danced before him or grovelingly tore at roots or grass that might trouble his feet. The dance ended abruptly. The great chorus of wives set up an ecstatic scream of praise. The four women who had attended him led him back to his chair, dried his body with cloths, gave him water to wash his mouth, and then, standing about him in a group as artfully composed as a stage picture, slowly fanned him.

With equal abruptness the uproar of the orchestra had stopped. Perfect silence came. The sun sank, clouded and blood-red, into the forest. Then the stillness was broken by the long roll of a kettle-drum which died to the softness of a heart-beat. A rattle spoke and was silent; a woman began to sing. Softly the others took it up. At first it was only a breath of sound, but gradually it gained in volume like a rising wind. A single drum-beat or dry-voiced rattle punctuated this wild, tender plaint, and then it died away like a sigh.

"There is no hatred in our hearts [they sang],
Our hearts are good

Because our king is with us.
Our king has danced,
We have seen him dancing before us—
Hatred has left our hearts."

And Niapu, with a weary, inscrutable face, leaned forward in his chair, staring haughtily, not at the hundred and eighty of his heart's desires, not at us, but through us and beyond, wishing we would go so that he could return to his dark dreams and his oblivion.

Ay, in the very temple of Delight . . .

Chapter 20

A STORY

I SHOULD like to tell a story, a true story—because it is a brief, tragic epic of the Congo forest, a glimpse of what that black-maned lion Africa can do when her paw is lifted to strike. One evening in a forest outpost, before the gasoline lanterns in the Hindu shop poured their bright glare over the little terrace where one or two colonials were drinking sundowners, we met an Englishman. He was a pale, somehow broken-looking person, and in the dim light we thought he was an old man, only to discover later that he could not be much over thirty. And he had, to a marked degree, that indescribable something that English gentlemen possess and take with them to every nook and cranny in the world.

Captain Blank, as we shall call him, had been wounded in France during the war; he recuperated in the coast guard service in England and was then sent to Sierra Leone in British West Africa. It was amusing at Sierra Leone, he said, because the harbor was full of cruisers and mine-sweepers and submarine-chasers, there were gay dinners at the officers' messes and at Government House, and all the swank of the British military whether at war or at peace.

The climate of Sierra Leone being what it is, the usual three years of colonial service is cut to one, and when it was Blank's

TWO HUNDRED BLACKS TO TRANSPORT FIVE WHITES

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SUPPER TIME ON SAFARI

(*See page 227*)

time to go home, the Governor invited him to return as his A.D.C. But Blank did not like Africa—at least he thought he didn't. Unfortunately for him, however, he went on a two months' hunt in the interior before leaving, a hunt which subtly, and at the time imperceptibly to him, changed his point of view. When he got back to England the war was over and he didn't know just what to do. Then he began to remember that hunt, and, too, the nagging urge to return to her which Africa drops like a drug in the veins of those who come within her reach would not leave him alone. So he came back and his evil genius inspired him to put all the money he had in a business venture in Dar-es-Salaam. The business collapsed and Blank began to hunt ivory for a living.

Now it must be understood that hunting elephants and making it pay is quite different from paying to hunt elephants. In the latter case you have a big, perfectly equipped safari, gun-bearers and trackers galore, express or heavy magazine rifles, and every protection against disease and accident that money can give.

But if the professional is going to make a profit above his expenses and the price of his licenses, he can afford no luxuries. He is usually armed with a Mauser, and his safari is cut to a few men carrying the barest necessities. When he is on the trail of a good tusker he cannot afford to let anything stop him. Leaving his caravan if necessary, he trails the beast night and day with a single gun-bearer until he makes the kill. At night, if he is in lion country and man-eaters are reported, he sleeps in a tree; otherwise he rolls up in a blanket on ground wet with the perpetual mold of the forest. A boy tends the fire and keeps the hyenas from removing his features while he sleeps. He lives largely on native food and has neither the time nor servants to see that the water he drinks is properly steril-

ized. These and other hardships, together with the actual dangers of the hunt, help to reduce the average life of a professional elephant hunter, so you are told in Africa, to four years. Some of them add poaching to the other hazards of the trade, and if the local official will not accept a sweetener, their way is indeed difficult.

Blank had been a good shot, a persistent hunter, and he was annoyingly modest. He could not remember just the number of elephants he had shot in various parts of British Africa and the Congo, but some one said it was between a hundred and fifty or two hundred.

Was he, we asked, ever afraid when he was hunting elephants?

"Oh, yes, of course. Everybody who has hunted elephants very much is afraid. At first you're not because you don't know them. I've always noticed that beginners take it very lightly, and of course they are accompanied by experienced men. But when you're all alone and as you get to know elephants, you feel differently. They do such deucedly unpleasant things. One chap I knew was charged when his gun was empty. He managed to crawl off and hide in very deep grass, but the elephant broke off a limb from a tree and began systematically beating the cover. Oh, yes, he got the poor chap, pulled off his head and then tore him to pieces. Sometimes they sit on a man and grind him into the ground. They did that to an Italian—Akely tells the story. And last month in Tanganyika an old friend of mine, an Englishman, was killed right before his son's eyes. The elephant took him in his trunk and pulled him up over his tusks as you'd pull a glove over your hand. Yes, they're vindictive beasts, but there's a fascination about them, too. Take the sounds they make. One is just their ordinary conversation among themselves, trumpeting and so forth. Then

there is a sound which near at hand is rather soft, but which carries. It must be a call to other elephants far away. It is faint and clear like some of the notes of the drums these chaps signal with. I'd hate to tell you how far it carries; I dare say you wouldn't believe me. Sometimes when I've been out with my tracker he would suddenly hear something I could not hear. It was that far-off call, and he would start right away in the direction it came from. I never argue with native trackers, because they know and they are always right. We would travel sometimes half a day or even more before we came up with the elephants, and they were always just where he expected them to be.

"The third sound elephants make? Well, I dare say that's what makes experienced elephant hunters, in the end, afraid of elephants. After you've had a few narrow squeaks you can hear it even in your sleep. It's the scream of a charging elephant. It's terrible. The oftener you hear it the more terrible it is."

But to go back to the story. During all the years Blank was shooting elephants, his sisters in England had been begging him to come home. At last they prevailed and he decided to shoot his way back, going out by way of the Nile. But just at that time, when he was living on a native *dhow* in some backwater up Kivu way, he was bitten by a Spirillum tick, locally known as the Kimputi. The result of a Kimputi tick bite is intermittent fever, often blindness, and sometimes death. But Blank was fortunate enough to come out of it some months later having only partially lost the sight of one eye. When he recovered, news of a big tusker took him back into the Ituri for one more hunt before he started north.

He got the tusker, but he got sleeping-sickness also. For a little while he didn't know what it was, thought it might be

the Kimputi tick fever come back again. But when he finally reached a doctor he found out what it really was. A new American remedy had just been introduced into the Congo and was being tried out. The doctor, who was a Belgian, did not quite understand its use, and he gave Blank too much, just one injection too much. As a result Blank became totally blind in his good eye. But the doctor assured him it would all clear up in about three weeks.

But weeks went by and then months, and he got no better. Then he heard of a famous European scientist and specialist in sleeping-sickness who was passing through the Congo. Blank went clear to Niangara to see him. This man told him there was no hope. The optic nerve of his good eye had been entirely destroyed by the arsenic, and just a glimmer of sight remained in the eye which had been injured by the Kimputi tick fever, enough to get about unaided, but not enough to do any shooting or to enable him to make a living in England.

Blank intimated that the first six months after he heard this were pretty hard. It somehow made it worse to learn that that particular remedy had been used for only three weeks and then given up. A chap couldn't help thinking if he had only gone to the doctor three weeks earlier or three weeks later, or if the doctor had only given him one treatment less . . . ! Thinking about things like that didn't do a chap any good.

Now Blank has a small jungle claim, of which ten acres are cleared and planted to manioc. He hopes to make it all into a palm-oil plantation in time.

"Why don't you write your hunting experiences?"

This most modest of men was confused. He couldn't write, had nothing much to tell—only about elephant hunts. But the idea seemed to grow as a possibility and to cheer him. He had to work during the day on his plantation, but at night, per-

haps, he might try. Later on, after he had been able to buy a good lantern which gave plenty of light . . .

He dined with us one night, lunched with us next day, but to our great disappointment did not come to say good-by. I'm afraid he feared we might offer to help him in some way.

Chapter 21

SOME MISSIONARIES

THROUGHOUT all the Uele district you hear much talk of the Dominican mission at Rungu, famous because it has electric lights. In the very heart of the dark Ituri there are electric lights! It is the wonder of everybody. And shortly after we arrived that first time at Rungu, we received an invitation from the Superior, Father Paul, to lunch at the mission. Father Paul, we learned, had formerly been a civil engineer engaged in laying out one of the Congo railroads. When he was nearly forty his wife died. He went back to Belgium, became a Dominican monk, and then returned to Africa to found his Rungu mission in what was then one of the wildest parts of Africa.

It is a businesslike place, consisting of half a dozen substantial buildings, the bricks made from the well-kneaded clay of ant hills. The concession has important timber holdings and abundant water power which Father Paul has harnessed to make the famous electric light and run the sawmill. The natives were gay and naked except for a Catholic medal about their necks—far too intelligent, these priests, to demean the fine bodies of the women with Mother Hubbards.

In the cool sitting-room littered with scientific books and electrical appliances, we found Father Paul and several other tall, robust, heavily-bearded fathers. When luncheon was an-

nounced they slipped their long white priest's robes over their khaki trousers, and we sat down to a ceremonious meal of many courses—all of which savored strongly of peanut oil—and served by startled-looking little black boys. All missionaries, Catholic and Protestant alike, seemed to be waited on by very young children. And we talked about the missionary business in the Congo.

A certain wise old priest not long before had remarked, "One must have common sense in Africa," and, barring the implication that it isn't equally needed everywhere else in this remarkable world, it was the truest thing I heard there. To this Father Paul added:

"One must not expect too much. One must be content to make haste very slowly. It is the work of centuries, not of years. Converts? Oh, we could baptize them by the thousand if we wanted to, and it would mean nothing. They love that sort of thing. We've only baptized a hundred and fifty in eight years. And we never even approach the great chiefs. Polygamy stands too greatly in the way. If we baptized them it would be our duty to interfere in their private lives, and we prefer to have them as friends. We must not think too much just yet of religion or even of ethics. We must be content to be part of the civilizing process which brings many changes, each one associated with and dependent upon every other. Some day I shall build a factory here; I shall train workers, develop them economically. I do not just teach the children to read and write, which unfits them for manual labor; I teach them to work with their hands. I am trying to make people to fit into the new order, into the machine and economic age."

So saying Father Paul took off his white robe, and with his trousers stuffed into high boots, he rode off on his bicycle to

inspect his machinery. Never was anything more manly than the atmosphere of the Rungu mission.

Not all the priests we met were as hopeful or as able to cope with the situation as these. I remember one young father at a mission near the fever-ridden post of Avacubi, who had had blackwater fever with three relapses. It had left him afraid, and fear is a bad companion in Africa. "Ah, for many of us," he sighed, "it is a futile sacrifice. Just so many lives ruined in Africa, and for what? Not one convert in a hundred is a Christian. If all the whites were to go away they'd be eating each other again in six months."

While we were at Father Paul's mission a rather singular incident occurred. We were chatting in the workmanlike salon when a strange-looking native in a long white dress came into the room. "That," Father Paul unexpectedly observed, "is an hermaphrodite. It was being persecuted in the village where it lived, so we took it and trained it to work in the dispensary as a nurse. At first we didn't know whether to dress it as a man or woman but finally decided for woman's costume. It would be dangerous to leave the poor thing at large."

"Why?"

"Sooner or later the others would surely kill and eat it."

This statement is Father Paul's responsibility, not mine, and brings us to the always engaging subject of cannibals.

Not long after seeing Father Paul's hermaphrodite, so tempting to the anthropophagical tastes of its friends and relations, I had an opportunity to find out something about cannibalism from officials who ought, if any one could, to know. We had been, of course, for months among peoples who, at some time or another, ate human flesh quite freely. But the question which interested us was whether they still did so. It happened that a government official and an old army officer who had

seen much service in the early days under King Leopold were taking a sundowner in our camp, and we put the question to them:

"Well," the official replied, "there is a case of that kind before the courts in Niangara at the present time. You know that case, Colonel?" The Colonel did. The administrator went on to say that a certain man in a village near Rungu had had trouble with one of his wives or slaves, and that the lady had suddenly disappeared. It so happened that a Belgian official was on safari through the forest at that time and that he came on this man picnicking with a friend beside a camp fire on which a pot was boiling. Curious, the official peered into the pot and there beheld a woman's two hands, bubbling merrily. The troublesome wife or slave never reappeared, and the case, the administrator added, would come up for trial in Niangara the following month.

"I think the truth is," the Colonel said, "that many of the older people would still just as soon eat human flesh as any other, but with the strict laws against cannibalism and the abundance—abundance, that is, compared to the famines they used to have—of other food, they find it too much trouble. Graves are not rifled as they used to be, and it is very rare that they deliberately kill some one for the purpose of eating him. Although it does from time to time happen. People have mistaken ideas, too, about the whole thing. Cannibals were never more ferocious or dangerous than other natives. You, for instance, eat mutton, but you don't want to tear a sheep to pieces every time you see one, nor did they look on human beings just as so many steaks and chops. Practically all the peoples among whom you have been traveling have been and in a small way probably still are cannibals, and you can see yourself what pleasant people they are."

Originally the African natives had, like all primitives, eaten certain parts of a dead chief or dead warrior for symbolic reasons, and our informant thought it probable that real cannibalism came into practice in periods of starvation following the slave raids. It finally reached such a point, however, that they fattened slaves to sell as food—even marched the victim, the Colonel assured us, about the market place, where buyers chalked off on his body the portion they wished to secure.

It was not, however, of cannibals but of missionaries that I started out to speak, and before leaving the subject I should like to present to you two young men who offer a rather startling contrast to the fathers at the Dominican mission. We were established in a forest *gîte* on a newly built fragment of motor road, and soon after our arrival black boys appeared bringing gifts of pineapples and sweet, small bananas. The presents were sent, we learned, from an English mission a little distance away in the bush. There were only two young men at this station, and the next day they came in to lunch with us. They, like so many other young men we met in the Congo, were hungry to talk, especially Mr. F. This Mr. F. was a tall, lean-limbed, handsome young fellow, with sky-blue eyes, a high color, and a candid and engaging smile.

They were glad, he said, to see us, but might easily have missed doing so, as they had only just got back from a tour in the forest. "Yes," he exclaimed buoyantly, "we took the gospel to fifty of Madangba's wives. I don't say they accepted it, but they listened. They have heard the Word."

"Hallelujah," exclaimed his companion, a shy, quiet little man who seldom spoke.

"We deal mostly, however," F. continued, "with the com-

mon people. I go from village to village and give them all a gospel day. Directly I'm up in the morning my porters beat the drum and we march around the square singing. You get the crowd that way. They like those things, you know. Then we give them the Word."

"Do you make many converts?"

"Well, this is a bad district around here. A godless district. Their hearts are hard. But at least they don't have to go to hell through not having heard the Word. We've given them their chance."

"If they had never heard it would they go to hell?"

"That is what the Book says."

"It seems unfair."

"Ah," cried Mr. F., showing his white teeth joyously, "there are many things we don't understand."

"Amen," said the other young man.

"We do have a few Christians, but not many, and only one bright Christian. Shouldn't you say, Hollins, we only had one bright Christian?"

"I should say so." But Hollins added that there were some who, even if not bright or even if not exactly Christians, were such good people they might not go to hell.

To this Mr. F. could not agree. Only those who had been saved escaped it. All who were not, whether it was their fault or not their fault, were doomed. It was the Word.

He himself still seemed to be in a state of wonder and exaltation at his own salvation. He came, he said, from a Christian Methodist family in the north of Ireland and served, during the war, in a regiment of Horse Guards. There he had so far fallen as to drink ration rum and smoke cigarettes. These bad habits lingered on after he left the army and he even

danced and consorted with frivolous and unchristian people. But he was not happy. In this crisis a famous evangelist came to Belfast and the young guardsman experienced conversion.

He was saved. "Then," Mr. F. cried, "I came out red-hot for God!" He never touched another cigarette or glass of spirits, and he testified on street corners. His employers did not like the street preaching and said so. Whereupon he told them he was working for One greater than they, threw up his job, and came to Africa.

We asked whether he thought that we, some of whom smoked cigarettes, occasionally drank alcohol, or did not believe in the Word as he did, would surely go to hell.

"Yes," he said simply and with regret.

Both of these young men were chiefly concerned with what they called Sin on their station. "If a man has many wives he's got to put away all but one. If any man or woman, boy or girl, is living in Sin, he must give it up or be driven off." The young man's blue eyes blazed fanatically. There was something monastic about him—a twelfth century monk, but well soaped. "I have my head man watching all the time, and the minute there is Sin he finds it out and tells me. The Belgian officials are not helpful. Often they refuse to punish Sin where we point it out. Or they refuse to believe my Capita, a good Christian who never lies. Or sometimes even *we* can't get to the bottom of the case. Then I go into my room and get down on my knees. I say, 'God, I don't know whether this man or woman has sinned. But You know, and You've got to cut the case.' " (A French-Portuguese expression, *trancher la palabre,* used by local officials, meaning to cut short, to pronounce the final judgment in any dispute.) "And He does. Time and again God has cut the case. Oh, we've got a God!"

"Hallelujah," ejaculated Hollins.

"Have you many natives at your station?"

"No, very few."

I sat facing the courtyard. I could see Gabriel with his baboon face strolling about. Then a beautiful naked youth passed, blowing a soft air on his antelope horn. Two slender naked girls stole out of the cook-house and disappeared with two of our boys. Hot sun, black pagan bodies, the blue-eyed Northman with his prepossessions—how strange it all was. . . .

A week before we had passed through a small Belgian outpost one Sunday morning. It was market time and the square was filled with a tumultuous mob of gay, healthy-looking, splendidly built women from the bush, dressed in a few green leaves, selling their plantains. Near by, a group of little mission boys in blue denim sang hymns, and a denim-clad black man with a long, solemn, sanctimonious, and, alas! very hypocritical face, preached to them. They were supervised by a rather smartly dressed Englishman who had come in with them from the mission. "What does the preacher say?" I asked him.

"He says the earth was once destroyed by flood and all but the righteous were drowned. The next time the earth will be destroyed by fire and all but the righteous will be burned up. And when the resurrection day comes, he is warning them, they will not have the excuse that they did not hear the Word. If they don't heed it they will go to hell for all eternity."

The little black boys rolled inattentive eyes.

"What a pity," I said, "to put these people in our clothes."

The young man was horrified. They could never, he said, become moral without clothes!

He belonged, it seemed, to the same mission as our two visitors. They spoke of him with admiration and of three other missionaries, all, we thought, with the most remarkable names, Mr. Stud, Mr. Roadhouse, and Mr. Evening—names which re-

minded us of the titles of hymns we had seen in an evangelical hymn-book: "Almost Persuaded," "Why not say yes tonight?" "Crown Him," "Great God, what do I see and hear?" And both of these young men seemed to be much inspired by their chief, a veteran missionary in Africa who had given them a slogan, "D.C.D."

"Don't care a damn, it means. He says you can use the devil's words for God. Don't care a damn if money doesn't come from England, D.C.D. if you're down with fever or if the officials obstruct the Lord's work. Don't care a damn and carry on." They quoted him constantly. "I hope," this remarkable old man cries, "that they'll send me down to hell when I die so I can begin preaching the gospel as soon as I get there." We saw an automobile belonging to the mission headquarters, and the letters D.C.D. were painted on the door.

This extreme evangelicism in rare instances "takes" among the natives and sometimes takes too hard. There has been a recent case before the courts in Elizabethville of a native who insisted on baptizing his converts in the middle of a rushing river full of whirlpools, saying the Lord would save His anointed. Sixty were drowned before the authorities could lock him up. A few years ago a native on the lower Congo fancied himself the second incarnation of Christ. A Belgian official told me the details. For miles and miles about the people carried the dead and dying to him to be resuscitated. They even dug up years-old graves, and the routes were choked with processions of howling fanatics carrying pestilential corpses. They resented interference and the thing finally took on the proportions of a small revolt against the authorities. Property was destroyed and lives lost. They had to get out I forget how many companies of troops to put it down.

In his district this same official has three American Protestant

missionaries. One is an ex-circus clown, the other an ex-newsboy, and the third a farm hand. I am a Protestant born and bred, but I do think some of our sects ought to be more restrained in their choice of missionaries. You cannot live among so-called primitive peoples without realizing that intelligence, breeding, and discipline are more necessary in dealing with them than they are, even, in dealing with us. And these, at least the discipline, the Catholic missionaries invariably possess.

Chapter 22

PEACE UNDER THE SUN

Our route lay southward through rolling, open grasslands—a wild-looking, beautiful, empty land blooming in savage quiet. Invariably that kind of scene in Africa stirs you in a special way; something dissolves, leaving peace and indifference. You are indifferent for the moment, even to the thought of death, for you feel its insignificance and yours in the face of life as vast, and old and still, and as impersonal as this; a mere episode releasing you back to this quiet to which you belong—of which you are, in some way, a part. Actualities lose their outlines, colors seem like sound, and the roll of drums becomes a pattern you can see.

Toward evening the road entered the fringe of the forest, became an avenue of royal palms along which two or three white men in clean duck strolled after the heat of the day. We had reached Wamba, the end of the motor road, and beyond lay a long march on foot through the forest to the Ituri River. Hitherto we had only made small safaris, leaving most of the luggage at the point of departure to which we went back. Now it must all go with us, necessitating at least a hundred and fifty porters; and as none of us cared to walk if a lazier method of getting along were possible, we also demanded five portable chairs and eight men each to carry us.

The young official shook his head. Two hundred porters—

PREPARING FOR THE RIVER JOURNEY

(*See page 237*)

DOWN THE ARUWIMI

(*See page 237*)

including the forty bearers for the chairs—were a good many, especially as an official also waited in Wamba for a safari. It could be managed, but it would take time. Grumbling, he left the dim, lantern-lighted *gîte,* and at once the signal drum began to send out its demands for men and more men to be sent in from villages far and near. During the week that followed this indigenous telegraph instrument was seldom silent and slowly a small army of tall, fine blacks congregated in Wamba, obeying—much against their will, as they hate carrying—the official and reiterated commands of the drum.

For no particular reason, three young Greeks had taken an active part in the arrangements we were making with the *administrateur,* and when these were over they invited us into their small shop brilliant with lamplight, the chairs and tables covered with scarlet cloth, shelves piled high with tins, bottles, calicoes. After the dark, chaotic *gîte,* full of tin trunks and ragged servants, this gay, neat little shop was an extremely pleasant place to be in, and often while we were in Wamba we sat there listening to the young Greeks tell stories of their ivory-buying expeditions. One or another of them was almost always on safari in the forest. He took with him a load of trade goods and established himself in native villages where he made a few presents and displayed before the chief's wives the objects he knew they most lustfully desired. In this way, if the chief were reluctant to part with his ivory, he could be wheedled into doing so by covetous women on fire for the beads, calicoes, and perfumes. And when business was not on hand, the old men of the village talked to him about the Mother God of the earth and told him love stories of their young days.

These young Greeks were, they told us, exceedingly anxious to go to the United States, having heard that our manners and

customs were so very strange. They were particularly interested in Ma Ferguson, of whom they had read in a Greek paper published in America, and they had also been informed that Mrs. Woodrow Wilson would be the next president of the United States.

The daily uproar in front of our camp could be heard throughout Wamba. It was caused by the presence of Sophie, a chimpanzee which we had picked up on the way. Sophie's first move after she was hoisted up on the truck was to shoot out a long arm, seize one of our live chickens, and pull its head off. Arrived in Wamba and chained to the pillar of the *gîte,* she promptly climbed up and destroyed half the thatched roof before we noticed her activities. She was then removed to a stump in front of the veranda where she sat all day showing off before her large, appreciative audience of howling blacks, and throwing rocks at them. They especially loved to see her drink from a bottle or from her enamel cup—she was very fond of beer and other alcoholic beverages—and eat from her enamel plate. Water she drank in such quantities that it had to be poured down her throat in pailfuls, and she scooped up her rice with a crooked forefinger in precisely the way the natives do themselves. If you came within her lightninglike reach, she grabbed and broke anything you might be carrying, wound her powerful arms around you, and had to be choked before she would give up. She was often vicious with the blacks and severely bit several, but although she tore our clothes and nearly strangled us, her intentions toward us were not only innocent but affectionate.

Nothing could be more puzzling than the wise, sad, foxy look in Sophie's amber eyes. We tried to define and to limit her intelligence but could never decide whether she knew more

than we thought, or whether we thought she knew more than she did. And she never failed to vary her periods of wild misbehavior with sudden lapses into a sly, dovelike, goody-goodiness and mock humility. All with the air of thinking us very childish and easy to fool.

Days round with sun passed somnolently over Wamba. The palms whispered, the green was so green it turned the faint blue mist to lavender; the clean red earth was redder here than elsewhere, and at dawn the white mist made the red road look like a frosted autumn road at home.

There is something special about Wamba, some sorcery. It puts a spell upon you. It is an old, old place. Already on a map of Africa made in 1721 I find the word Wamba sprawled across the whole district. Wamba must have been a great king of ancient lineage.

It is high noon. Under a thatch, half in sunlight, half in shade, crouches a naked, bronze boy. He is not sleeping, not awake, but motionless in the alert, trancelike quiet these people fall into—like the dreamy wakefulness of a cat. His legs and arms are rounded with fine shadow. He is a statue. Tall men sit in the shade on little mats, naked too. They make no noise, they are smiling with all their white teeth and languid, brilliant eyes, and they play a gambling game with smooth, polished seeds. Ten porters go by, carrying a heavy log on their shoulders. They sing as they march, and the muscles stand out all along their back and limbs, their pink-palmed feet and spreading horny toes meeting the earth with a soft jarring thud, heavy with the weight on their shoulders. The log is held with green withes, freshly woven. All the pots and all the baskets you look at are handmade; the rafters on the roof of the *gîte* are hand-hewn and hand-tied with vines, making

them pleasant to look at. Natives, erect, walking noiselessly, pass up and down, and each one salutes as he goes by. Why should they have to salute us?

A young girl stops to stare; her slender body gleams like dark metal, her breasts are as firm as fresh fruits, and a scarlet flower is stuck through her ear. Beside her is an old, old woman, lean and wrinkled like a tobacco leaf, but the young girl does not look ahead and see herself. All day an idiot woman sits happily on an elephant skull clasping to her naked breast two large red tomato tins from New York, and just in front of me a brilliant insect hangs as if suspended on a thread, his wings moving so fast you cannot see them at all. The riddle is too big even to guess at. There is no riddle, only life—"The wind is my brother, and my sister is the rain. . . ."

Chapter 23

SAFARI

It was early morning, and our two hundred porters, assembled at last, seethed and shouted in front of the *gîte*—many of them accompanied by handsome young wives loaded with cooking-pots and mats and unfettered by any other clothing than a narrow green leaf. The baggage, divided into fifty-pound loads, lay lined up in a huge semicircle on the ground, and as some of the loads looked lighter and easier to carry than others, deafening disputes took place on all sides. A wooden hammock had been made for Sophie, to which she was fastened by a chain long enough so that she could either ride or walk. The uproar pleased her, and she bounded about, dragging the basket after her, biting, tearing, scattering yelling groups. The *administrateur,* the three Greeks and a mob of nondescript natives watched the scene from the side lines. The official wage for carrying is one and a half Belgian francs a day, or about four and a half cents. We agreed to pay six cents and to give a good tip as well, as we were anxious to move rapidly and make longer marches than is usual.

At last all the fights were settled, each man stood beside his load, the signal to depart was given. Sophie climbed on the pole of her basket, riding proudly at the head of the procession. Besides her two bearers she had an attendant—a silly man

in a brimless straw hat and the skeleton of a long shirt flapping about his bare legs, whose job it was supposed to be to attend to her food and drink. He walked, rather frightened, beside her basket, armed with an ineffectual little switch, and was despised by Sophie. A large cage housing the three gray parrots rode on the head of another porter. Two little chocolate drops carried, one a brief-case, the other a typewriter, with strict orders never to get out of my sight; and they never did. The *tipoyes* followed, then our boys gloomily walking, then the long, long line of porters, with tin trunks, beds, chairs, cooking-outfit, tents, films, cameras, and all the rest of it on their heads. In this order the safari wound down the red, palm-arched road into the deep forest.

We now entered a very different world from that in which we had been traveling. The villages of the great Mangbetu chiefs were usually on the fringe of the forest, and their domains included much open country where cotton, coffee, and manioc were raised and brought in important revenues. But the people living along the trail we now followed were poor. Little food could be raised in the small clearings; the chiefs were insignificant. Moreover, as we penetrated farther into the heart of the Ituri we came to a district famous for fever and dysentery, to which the Arab slavers who had long occupied it had bequeathed a special heritage of demoralization and disease.

The forest itself was superb. The trail climbed steeply up and down in a cathedral nave of virgin growth a hundred feet high. It was hung on both sides with a dense curtain of verdure, the infinite variety of the leaves making an exquisite pattern of light, shadow, and contrasting forms. The usual bridges of woven vines took us over streams and swamps, but when large rivers intervened the whole safari had to be pad-

dled across in dugout canoes. Sometimes the path wound round a hillside and we could see below us a limitless floor of tree tops spreading away and away, mist-hung and unbroken. Raucous birds croaked, monkeys chattered, but although the trail was marked as usual with fresh spoor of elephant and other game, the noise of the approaching safari drove all the keen-eared creatures of the forest into hiding.

In the twilight of that green world it was neither hot nor cold. The dry season was not yet over, and we had no rain. The sunshine was like a gold mist in the highest tree tops but never fell on us until we emerged from the shade and crossed the roasting plaza of a village. In those blistering open places the sun gave you a feeling almost of terror. The natives never stayed out in it. The sun-baked street, flanked by huts in bad repair, was empty. Drowsy men lounged on native-made reclining-chairs under a thatched pavilion—men's clubs of sorts, seen everywhere throughout the Congo. Old women crouched in doorways, and doubtless the young ones absent in the fields took refuge, during these mortal hours, in the shade. In many villages were the most primitive of blacksmith shops where boys pumped little bellows made of skin and lifted the hot ore with banana stalks bent to make tongs, and copper ornaments were supplanted by anklets and wristlets of beaten iron. Aside from the activities of the boys, a deathlike languor lay on these villages, bewitched as it were by the malevolent sun, and we were glad when the tall forest closed in about us once more.

Certainly the most peaceful, the most poetic, the most altogether delightful mode of transportation in the world is *tipoye*-riding through an equatorial jungle. The *tipoyes* were made of woven palm withes, the seat very deep, the back reclining with room for cushions, a swinging stirrup provided for the feet to rest on. The chair was hung on bamboo poles,

and these rested on the shoulders of four men walking single file, two in front and two behind. The four other *tipoyeurs,* who from time to time relieved these, walked alongside, carrying the spears and drinking-gourds. The movement of the chair was pleasant and soporific—except, indeed, when a fallen tree blocked the trail and the bearers, in making a detour, brushed against a bush swarming with stinging ants!

From time to time one of the *tipoyeurs* intoned a loud, sonorous note, from which the others began building a song. It was not so much a tune as the basic structure of a tune. All sang different parts, and those walking alongside beat a quick accompaniment against the wooden handles of the spears. No matter how slow and long-drawn-out the notes might be, the drumming never slackened or missed a beat: "A white woman rides in the chair. A white man walks behind. Am I tired? Am I dead? No, I am a man. I am not tired. We shall receive large gifts, they will give us many francs." Over and over again they repeat the same words, except when they are singing one of their own songs in incomprehensible tribal dialect. The piece usually ended in a wild chorus of shouts and grotesque sounds and a final cry of *Wapi!*

Sometimes we sang with them, or sang one of our own songs which they imitated perfectly, even to the sound of the words —of the meaning of which they had, of course, no idea. They laughed and watched us with round brilliant eyes, made engagingly demanding gestures for cigarettes, holding out their two cupped hands to receive them. No well-bred bush native ever gives or receives anything with one hand, and there is an indefinable courtesy in the movement with which, half apologetically, he presents his two hands, bowing as he does so. This is a form which they also observe among themselves—

except, of course, those whose good manners have been ruined by association with whites.

Swinging all day along the cool arcades I was troubled by strange longings. A desire for canned corn obsessed me. I never eat it at home, but there I brooded over it for hours; and ice cream soda, and oyster stew. . . .

The day's march ended about three o'clock, and then our troubles began. The rather tumbledown *gîte* and cook-house were always situated near a native village whose chief was supposed to provide for the necessities of travelers. But when we bore down upon him with our small army of hungry men we were anything but welcome. Naturally the unfortunate people preferred to keep food they could eat rather than exchange it for money they had no way of spending. And there were no longer white officials to smooth the way and issue orders which must be obeyed.

We, in our *tipoyes,* were the first to arrive, boys next; and porters, footsore and tired, came straggling in for an hour or more. Our interpreter, whom we could not understand and who could not understand us, was sent off for the local chief, and after a long time a ragged, sulky, undernourished black reluctantly appeared. We demanded wood, water, not less than two thousand bananas—green plaintains they are, eaten cooked —and goats if possible. But he was such a poor, petty chieftain that often he didn't own a goat, or if he did had taken good care to hide it. Sulkily he went off to commandeer the bananas, and again we waited. Our boys had immediately rushed off to the village to secure a good place to sleep, and endless time went by before they turned up to make camp. When the cook arrived it was usually to demand two francs for palm wine, the search for which gave him a good alibi for another hour or two.

After an endless wait the wood arrived and the water, muddy and alive with jerky, squirming things. A little powdered alum was stirred into the pails, they were covered with a banana leaf, and the order was given that they were not to be disturbed—an order which was or was not obeyed as we were fortunate or unfortunate. After settling for an hour the water had to be carefully poured off the dregs into a five-gallon kettle and put on the fire. It takes a long time to bring so much water to boil on that kind of fire, and after it did start it had to go on boiling hard for at least fifteen minutes. Almost invariably the cook let the fire go out, and as you didn't know how long the water had boiled before this happened, you had to begin all over, often several times. There is no native word for boil but the monosyllable *grrr* has been adopted to fill the need, and occasionally, as the water began to bubble, Sindani came to us uttering the little sound and looking at us with his forever puzzled eyes. But as a rule he didn't bother to tell us the boiling had commenced; he simply took the kettle from the fire. To obviate this, we dropped a pill of some kind or a pinch of soda or salt in the water, conveying to him that it was medicine which required a long period of *grrr* after being put in. As their love of medicine is second only to their love of magic, or rather, as these are one and the same, this proceeding gave to the prolonged boiling process a new interest and validity.

Once in a while a ghastly crime was committed. Each boy was supposed to secure and heat water for his master's bath. But occasionally the precious kettle of drinking-water, all settled and nearly boiled, was rifled for a bath or stolen for dish-water. Nothing that has ever happened to me in my life has seemed so tragic and infuriating as this calamity did at that time. And after it was boiled and set away to cool, unceasing

watchfulness was required to see that they didn't dip into it with utensils dripping with unsterilized water.

Then the chop-boxes! The food was distributed in about thirty boxes, each with a different key. One night Sophie tore off the labels and after that all the keys had to be tried at random into all the locks every night. Why, as soon as a key was identified, it was not again labeled, is only explicable by the fact that, after weeks of travel and almost daily camp-making, after the heat, the continuous large doses of quinine, the constant vigilance required to see that the water both for drinking and cooking was sterilized, the unceasing burden of making people who do not understand you either linguistically or temperamentally do what you want them to—anything and everything not of vital necessity at the moment was left undone.

As soon as we began making camp, masses of villagers gathered about the *gîte*. Some of them brought things to sell—a small chicken, a few eggs or sweet potatoes, or a mass of grilled ants, greasy and still squirming, which they laid, neatly displayed on green leaves, on the floor of the *gîte* for our inspection, themselves waiting, their eyes riveted upon us, for any number of hours. The eggs we tested in a pail of water to see if they were fresh, and this proceeding, savoring of magic, delighted them.

Popular attention was about divided between us and Sophie. She was fastened to a tree by a long chain and sat in the lower branches, staring inscrutably down at her audience or making sudden descents on them. One of her antics might have had serious consequences for us when she stole a murderous-looking spear and hurled it into a group of little boys. None of them, fortunately, was struck.

In almost every village there were fights and palavers made

doubly difficult because of our inefficient interpreter. Porters and *tipoyeurs* committed depredations. A man trembling with fury rushes up to the *gîte* and harangues us. He is beside himself because some of our men have raided his place for banana wine. We think nothing less than our blood will appease him. But after exhausting efforts we find out that all he really wants is sixteen cents. It is given him and he departs smiling.

Today a more complicated palaver came up. A man marched furiously up to the veranda, hurled a dead chicken on the ground, and after a flood of angry reproach folded his arms and stood like an angry warrior, magnificently waiting. Charlie's linguistic intuition brought him to the conclusion that the "poor fellow" had accidentally killed one of our chickens and was confessing. So he patted the irate visitor on the back and said "Missouri"—a word which faintly resembles a Swahili phrase for "all right." All he received for his pains was so murderous a look that he never again lapsed into any tongue but English. Gradually it developed that Gabriel—of course it would be Gabriel—had hit this gentleman's chicken with a stone and killed it. We gave the man 5 francs in payment. He went off, counted the money, returned angrily and took up the former posture. We gave him 10 with the same result. Then 20 francs—over 60 cents, a grotesque price for anything in the forest. This too he refused, casting the money bitterly on the ground before us. Finally he was driven away by force only to return, wary but determined, to wait for justice. At last we bought a live chicken resembling as nearly as possible the late fowl he treasured so highly, for which we paid, under his eyes, the sum of 3 francs. A smile of utter gladness returned to his face and with profuse and radiant thanks he went off with his fowl, leaving the twenty disdained pieces of money on the ground.

The *gîtes* along this route were more than usually infested with a kind of tick the female of which has an inexplicable predilection for human feet. She insists on laying her eggs under somebody's toenails, where she burrows into the flesh, manufactures a large white sack, and fills it full of eggs. We frequently had to have one of the natives—they have, through much experience, become extremely expert—remove one of these odious insect incubators from our feet. As there were no windows in the rooms the operation had to take place in the glaring publicity of the little porch, attentively watched by a wide circle of blacks. The boys removed the ticks skillfully, but it was impossible to keep the needle they used sterile. The moment we handed it to them, carefully burned and washed in alcohol, they passed a grubby thumb and forefinger over it and set to work.

The sight of this operation inspired the natives to bring their maimed and diseased to us—sores, itch, elephantiasis, fever, skeleton children, people with dysentery, with what we thought was sleeping-sickness, or with leprosy. All we could do was to give out a little quinine or castor oil and disinfectants for the dreadful sores.

Meantime the porters, who had eaten nothing all day, patiently waited for us to find them food. We were not officially required to procure or pay for their food, but we found it much to our advantage to do so, and never in consequence had trouble with deserting men. At last long lines of women and children filed in, carrying loads of green plantains on their bare brown backs. One of us made the rounds with the interpreter, putting a certain number of brass coins into the—usually scrofulous—hands held out. The price varied from a cent and a half for a small bunch of bananas to three or four or even as high as five cents for the biggest. The men of the

village soon passed among the women and children, taking away the money.

Now the porters lined up. The interpreter divided the plantains into equal portions, about ten to a man, which were placed, one in front of each porter, on the ground. Sometimes there would be a few manioc roots as well. Then we had to explain regretfully that we could get no meat and no palm oil in which to cook their bananas. The porters, knowing we had tried, grinned and made the best of the situation. We gave each of them a cube of salt, which delighted them, and when they had received it, two hundred black hands holding white salt were flung into the air and the men cheered.

But tonight Gabriel came shouting: "There is a goat. The liver will be for me." The liver was not for him, but there was a goat—one small, miserable little thing for two hundred hungry men! Again they waited with their usual patient good humor. The goat escaped, was pursued, caught, butchered, skinned, cut up. Night came. It was so dark you could not see the long line of black figures, waiting. Then a swaying lantern appeared, and a man carrying the meat piled in a basket—the merest fragment for each. One porter held up a little hairy foot for us to see as his portion. It was pitiful. But they were soon cooking their bits over little fires and then they danced and sang all night.

"You look out for these people," white men in the Congo are always saying to you; "they are thieves, all of them. They're the worst kind of rascals. *Ce sont des vauriens, des crapules,*" etc. Yet our mile-long safari line straggled unsupervised; porters often laid their loads by the trail while they went into some village hidden in the bush, or carried their burdens in with them. Many of these boxes contained francs and the punc-

tured brass cash we carried to pay the men, the coins rattling invitingly. But not one piece of money or any article belonging to us disappeared while we were in the Congo, except what was taken by our semi-civilized boys. I do not wish to imply that Congo natives are saints. Doubtless a great deal of the immunity from theft and violence you experience among them is due to the iron hand which, from the beginning, has defended the interests of whites. But if not intrinsically better, proof is certainly lacking that they are intrinsically worse than anybody else.

By eight or nine o'clock we ourselves managed to dine, usually on tough chicken, rice, and something out of a can. But we were mortally sick of the taste of too fresh chicken, and canned food, if you eat too much of it, becomes strangely repellent. At last it was bedtime and we undertook the difficulties and precautions of the bath. There was no place to put soap or towels or to stand to dry yourself. It was impossible to let your foot or the ends of your bathrobe touch the tick-infested floor; strange insects crawled and scuttled in the dim lantern-light. But somehow, you managed to get into the warm, gritty water, obtained with what difficulty! and experienced the only easeful moment since the nerve-racking business of housekeeping in a *gîte* had begun that afternoon.

We were called before sunrise. While we were eating breakfast the canteens were filled with boiled water, camp came down, loads were made up, the porters fought for the best loads, and finally, in the misty light of early morning, we once more took the trail. A few of our Wamba porters deserted or fell out because of bad feet or fever, and we picked up new ones—mostly sickly wretches—as we went along. The forest became if anything more beautiful, but we were trail-weary.

Our nerves were jumpy, our hands shook with quinine, we were tired and did not sleep. Alice had a cough, the interpreter had fever, Sindani began to sicken. Small irritations took on absurd proportions. In one village the natives were impertinent and had to be driven from the *gîte* by force. One of these, a stupid-looking fellow, to whom I took a particular dislike, insisted on leaning on the veranda pillar, refusing impudently to leave. This being so infuriated me that I rushed on him with a gun which I couldn't shoot and which was not loaded. It was funny to see him run, but the humor of my own proceeding by no means dawned on me at the time.

And yet these annoyances were strangely superficial and had a way of vanishing suddenly, leaving only the inexplicable peace that sometimes comes to you in strange places. We sat at sunset in front of a neglected *gîte*. Tawny plumed grass had overgrown the clearing right to the forest's edge, and it bent and rippled like ripe wheat at home. Hot and sweet from the waving grass, cool from the forest, blew the airs of evening. The sun, reddening as it sank, slipped below the crenelated wall of the black forest. A man on silent feet came with a reed hoop, measuring the track of an elephant which had trampled his manioc, and with a long stick to show the length of its ivory. He said nothing, holding out the hoop and the stick, fixing troubled eyes on our faces until night blotted him and the symbols of his ancestral enemy from our sight.

The forest came very close. The lanterns at the doors of the rooms burned dimly and were arranged and rearranged so that they should not shine in our eyes. The light made long shadows in the bare rooms and a faint luminousness under the little tent of mosquito-netting over the cot. The thatch above began to whisper and crawl with the slow, furtive-sounding scratchings of the insect feet, and the drifting bits of desiccated rubbish to

fall softly on the roof of the net. The forest night, dankly chill and oppressive, bred dreams so near the surface that when dawn came you were not sure that you had slept at all.

And now other Kinshasa boys began to sicken. They declared they could go no further, and all we could do was to promise them rest and help in Avacubi. Worst of all, Alice's cough became serious, and still the trail stretched on through the gray-green forest.

Chapter 24

FEVER

BEFORE I left home a friend wrote me, "Whatever else you do in Africa, please don't have your picture taken on a dead elephant powdering your nose." From what I have learned of elephants after having been surrounded by them for several months, I decided that if I did not leave them strictly alone an elephant would be much more apt to be sitting on me powdering his. So my mind was definitely made up to remain cozily in camp at Avacubi and get a much-needed rest, while the others went up river to Penge in the very heart of the elephant country to hunt.

The whole safari was eager to get to the end of the journey. When at last we reached the outlying villages of Arabized natives where black men in long yellow robes and fezzes knelt on little mats praying toward the east, the *tipoyeurs* burst into a loud song, beat furiously on spears and bamboo poles, and began to run. The porters imitated them, and on the dead gallop the long string of men raced down Avacubi's main street and drew up in front of a large rest-house overlooking the swiftly flowing river.

In a few moments the *administrateur* or rather Territorial Agent appeared—a young man who in a time of great need proved most kind and helpful. A dozen prisoners clanked their chains and raised a fearful dust sweeping the front yard, and

as many women raised an equally choking dust sweeping the tiled floors of the *gîte*.

Handfuls and handfuls of francs and of brass coins were counted out and given to the porters, who passed in a long row. When they discovered that they had received almost twice the stipulated amount, plus a tip, they immediately thought the supply must be unlimited and set up the most terrible clamor for more until the agent, scolding us for setting a bad example, had them driven off. They stationed themselves at a safe distance, counting and tying their money in their loin cloths and occasionally dashing up to beg for bottles and tin boxes—especially *little* tin boxes.

The boys who were ill dragged themselves into camp in the wake of the safari and promptly disappeared. The only piece of furniture in the empty *gîte* was a table, and I came across Alice stretched on this. Her face was flushed, and she seemed unaccountably drowsy. We took her temperature and then took it again, hoping we had been mistaken the first time. We shouted for the boys. At last Ipoka appeared and set about putting up Alice's bed. Kole we found lying in an outhouse breathing with a queer whistling sound. He had a high fever and a sharp pain in his lung and was too ill to do anything but try to keep himself warm.

Alice's fever kept mounting. I hurried to the house of the Agent, across a courtyard full of the drying skins of leopards, antelope, and an immense python fifteen feet long. I asked him where the nearest doctor could be found:

"Back in Wamba where you came from, or in Stanleyville."

Back over that long route we had just traveled or nine days down river by dugout canoes to the motor road and an indefinite wait there for an automobile! Either way was out of the question so far as doing us any good was concerned. The

agent was very calm. Fever, he assured me, was common here. Avacubi was rather noted for it. "Double the quinine, give her hot drinks and make her sweat, that's all there is to do."

I rushed back to the *gîte* and out to the cook-house to see about the hot water. There I found Sindani lying on the floor, unconscious. I had him carried outside and laid on some banana leaves in the shade of the wall while I went in search of the interpreter. But there was no end, it seemed, to the nightmare. The interpreter was stretched out on an improvised bed in a state of complete collapse. Amoebic dysentery, it turned out to be, and my blood ran cold at the thought of his having been so often in our kitchen.

But the business of camp-making must go on. No water had been boiled, there was no fire, the chickens still squawked loudly, tied by the legs in the cook-house, waiting to be slain. Nimo was on one of his not very frequent hemp debauches; the *m'toto* had an infected foot and had to be sent to the native dispensary; Gabriel and Ipoka, the only sound boys left, quarreled over the work that had piled up for them and refused to do anything. Suddenly, without a word, Blair and Charlie, who were filling lanterns, opening chop-boxes, and so forth, threw down what they were working on and charged these two boys, yelling the most blood-curdling menaces they could think of. It was one of the funniest things I have ever seen and had a magical effect. Ipoka became a good nurse. Gabriel took over the kitchen and did it well. Stripped to the waist, he moved about the cook-house in a trance of contentment. The mere proximity of so much food made his eyes bulge and wreathed his fat lips in a continuous smile, but did not, alas, keep the pots and pans clean or insure the proper boiling of the water. A part of everything he cooked he purposely spoiled: "Cinders in the soup," he would announce, "not good

for whites, good for blacks; fish burned, not good for Madami," and so forth.

Now we pored over a little book on tropical diseases someone had given us in Kinshasa. We fixed hot bags for Alice, made warm tea, doubled her doses of quinine, administered what simple remedies we dared, and still the fever went up. The thermometer became an object of terror.

We were told that a priest at a near-by mission had some medical knowledge. He was not there when I arrived, but I talked for a while to the other fathers in a bare blue stucco room. Presently a very woolly little donkey trotted up the steps and into the salon, where he remained during the interview nuzzling the priestly beards and blowing little hurricanes from his investigating nose that scattered the priestly papers. He followed me back to town and was about to climb the stairs into our *gîte* when he caught sight of a friend, a white horse wandering among the palms—the third horse we had seen in all the Congo—and frolicked off to play with it.

It was evening when the medical priest arrived, supposedly to prescribe for Alice. He sat for a long time beside the cot. In the dim lanternlight, with his flowing white robe, his thin face and cloudy black beard, he looked like a figure from a sad biblical print, and he talked wistfully, almost hysterically, not about her, but about his own dreadful illnesses, his far-off home in Europe, and the elephant he had killed. He eagerly accepted an invitation to dine, while a tiny black boy with a lantern waited outside guarding his bicycle. It was after twelve when he rode away, the child running beside him with the light.

The fever did not abate. Sophie too was on her back with a most repulsive form of influenza. A curious kind of exhaustion overcame me. It was all I could do to drag myself about.

The responsibilities of the kitchen became suddenly overwhelming, more than I could bear. It seemed to me if I could just sit for days, with closed eyes, I would be all right. The rains, too, had begun, and it poured torrents, always at night. My roof leaked, and I spent most of the time moving my bed from one corner to the other. Fortunately the roof over Alice's room was sound. Several of the others now came in for a touch of fever and ailments of various kinds, but the hope of an elephant hunt was not at first abandoned; so we interviewed the Agent:

"Big tuskers are everywhere," the latter assured us. "Two men came in from up river with fine ivory only last week. But you'll have to go farther than Penge. The chief there has his people out constantly shooting elephant meat for the men who are working on the motor road."

"Motor road?"

"Yes, it won't be long now till it's built through the forest east of here clear to Lake Albert. What? You thought all the region west of Kivu and Edward was practically unknown to white men?" He laughed heartily. "My dear Madame, there are no such places in Africa. There are government posts everywhere, of course, in the colonies of the various European powers—which is all of Central Africa. No, we have not had many hunting-parties through here. Only a Polish prince last spring. He had an artificial moon. He hung it up by a stream and then climbed into a tree. The elephants love moonlight. They were attracted by the light, and when they came, *boum, boum,* he shot as many as he liked. He had a special license, of course. Have you got an artificial moon?"

We had neither an artificial moon nor a special license, and if we had had, it would have done us no good. For at last it became clear that not only Alice's illness but the general condi-

tion of the camp would make any move except in the direction of a doctor out of the question. Elephant hunting would have to be given up, but we none of us felt much regret, so anxious had we become to get out of the deadly shadow of the Ituri.

When Alice's fever got down to 101° we advised the extremely helpful and efficient Agent that we would start as soon as canoes and paddlers were ready. We had hardly finished telling him what we would need when the great signal drum began to send out the call. All night it broadcast its message, and before dawn we were awakened by the usual uproar around the *gîte*.

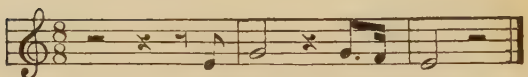
Porters were assembling to carry our baggage to a point below the rapids where we would embark in the canoes. The Agent weighed the baggage and made out the tickets. The entire charge for transporting eighteen people and two tons of luggage down river for nine days was just $40.

The invalids had so far improved that they could, at least, travel—with the exception of Sophie. She seemed to be worse, and the difficulty of keeping the boys from feeding her out of our cups and dishes, with the consequent possibility of infection for us, made us decide, with great regret, to leave her in charge of the Agent.

Four canoes waited for us below the falls. They were huge dugouts manned by twenty or thirty paddlers each. Shelters of fresh banana leaves were built in the middle, and the steamer chairs were placed under these. Baggage, *tipoyes,* cameras, boys, and ourselves, were stowed away in these remarkable craft, and the journey was begun.

Chapter 25

CANOES AND CROCODILES



YAH hoh, yah, hah, hoh . . .

The notes, loud and melancholy, rang across the river and seemed to float on and on over the quiet forest. They were slow and long drawn out, but the tempo back of them was, as always, breathlessly swift. The polished backs of the paddlers bent and rose, bent and rose; the carved black paddles, bound with gleaming brass and copper, plunged in unison with a soft, rhythmic splash and gently rocked the long canoe. A pole man standing in the prow called out the directions to the double row of paddlers behind, and all day they sang—songs more tender and melancholy than any we had heard. In all countries, river songs, it seems, are the saddest. The canoes were between forty and fifty feet long, hollowed by fire and adze, each one out of a single tree. The paddlers walked along the edge of the craft without in any way disturbing its equilibrium, and they kept a little fire burning on the floor in the stern with no apparent danger of burning through the ironlike wood.

Hour after hour, day after day, the gray-green jungle floated by. The roof of fresh leaf thatch over the chairs kept off the

sun; our nearness to the water somewhat tempered the heat. We had no books to read and would not have read them if we had had, and we did not even talk. Once, I remember, we discussed what we should eat when we got back to Paris and became quite excited, but for the most part we lay in our steamer chairs, abandoned to the pleasant and almost total blank that had come on our minds. No leaf or twig of the forest was stirred by a breath of moving air. But sometimes a miniature cyclone seemed to strike a few trees. After the wildly waving branches had become still we would see the great looped tails and shrewd faces of monkeys peering down at us. Then, all at once, they would lose confidence and with another little whirlwind would be gone, leaving the jungle as deadly quiet as before. Once we saw a great baboon that sat with legs stretched out, leaning against a tree. We took him for a native until he dropped on all fours and trotted off to join a band of comrades. Fearlessly they all turned to stare at us, their long, doglike faces stamped with a kind of sophisticated ennui. Sometimes whole bands of white-bearded monkeys played on the sands. Dense clusters of moths and butterflies fluttered close to the water. Little birds brilliant as flowers flashed in and out of the foliage, and curlews and cormorants swooped from island to island, accompanied by the yells of our boys imploring us to shoot. The boys, who greatly enjoyed this effortless transportation after the baleful toils of safari, were also much annoyed because we would not shoot monkeys for them to eat.

There were almost never any villages to be seen. Perhaps the custom of hiding them in the jungle is a heritage from days when Zanzibar slave pirates swept these waters, bringing hell itself to the river dwellers. It was rare that a native canoe passed us. For the most part we were alone with the baboons, the

wheeling birds, the languorously chanting men, in a world more dreamlike than a dream.

It was a dream from which, however, we were at times rudely awakened. This apparently placid Aruwimi (called the Ituri in its upper reaches), gleaming and unruffled as glass, is in reality little more than a series of waterfalls taking you gradually downhill to the Congo. Every little while its pleasant murmur turned to a roar and we saw white water leaping ahead. If the rapids were not dangerous, poles and paddles were suspended, the swift current caught the canoes and swept them over the falls to still water below, dotted with great powder puffs of foam. But more often we had to get out and walk. The four great canoes were entirely unloaded and our paddlers replaced by local pilots who were familiar with the rapids and who guided the empty canoes over them. As eyes unseen to us always watched behind the jungle screen and signal drums sent news of us ahead, so, when we reached a portage, a chief and his followers were usually waiting, and the women and children—who, along the Aruwimi, do all the carrying—were assembled to take the baggage around the falls.

The portages were of varying length and always seemed to come in the hottest part of the day. The trail left the river bank and plunged into a forest of bamboos and palms and tall trees that showered white, sweet-smelling flowers on the ground. Often we passed a burial place and in a small mausoleum of clay or bamboo would see the treasures of the dead man—a few earthen pots, an enamel saucepan or empty bottle, a paddle, a spear, or an umbrella. The presence of his belongings should have made the matter less grimly final than do our denuded tombs, but it did not. On the contrary, the absence of the departed from this little furnished habitation seemed only the more startling and irrevocable because he

alone was not there. For a short distance the path emerged from the forest to become the sizzling main street of the hidden village, then plunged again into the forest and on to the river's edge below the falls.

Until two or three o'clock the canoe ride was pleasant, but from then until we reached the *gîte d'étape* at the end of the day's march, it became distinctly trying. The heat grew suffocating, the river turned into a cauldron of hot water. You no longer knew what to do with your arms and legs, and the everlasting music of the paddlers became an intolerable affliction. As we approached, the hidden camp drums spoke incessantly: "Five whites approach with much baggage. Bring eggs and chickens. They are rich and come from far away."

At last the jungle parted, a thatched bungalow appeared, perched almost always on a hilltop above the river, and the usual crowd waited to carry up the luggage. The boatmen ended their paddling-song and intoned a specially mournful strain always sung at the moment of landing and then, pounding the sides of the canoes with their paddles, let the current sweep us up to shore. On the heads of scantily clad ladies and pot-bellied children our belongings were conveyed to the *gîte,* and we plunged into the same housekeeping battle we had waged all along the Wamba trail.

Gabriel was still cook and still enjoying it. He rushed at once to the cook-house and began enthusiastic preparations for dinner, with his rakish felt hat on one side, his shirt tail out, a pair of Blair's riding-trousers hanging to his ankles, unlaced, and under one arm a small cane, which he kept there during all his culinary activities.

Before leaving Avacubi, we had received impressive warnings from the Agent not to argue with the *capita* of the boat-

men about the portages: "When he says you must walk, please do so. Otherwise you run serious risk of accident."

But the warning suffered the fate of most good advice and was not taken. We had got tired of those blistering strolls, and the next time the *capita* told us to get out of the canoes we refused to do so, preferring, we indicated, to shoot the rapids. He begged, pleaded, raised his arms to heaven, but we were firm. The paddlers, pop-eyed with surprise at our determination, landed, and the local pilots with their poles got in. Ben, Charlie, and Blair were in the first canoe, Alice and I in the second. The boys prudently elected to walk, and the two emptied baggage canoes were to follow.

Having seen these foaming torrents of water roaring over the rocks and shallows so often from shore, we had come to think very little of them. Alice and I watched without interest the first canoe as it was caught in a racing torrent and wildly swept along the circuitous channel, pole men frantically prodding and pushing at rocks and bowlders and winning at last to quiet waters below. Then we felt the sudden drag of swift water under our own keel. The canoe shot forward, skimming over a fall of deep, fast water; then it struck a shallower place and ground over submerged rocks, then was out again in the raging current, pilots working like madmen. Suddenly something went wrong. In a swift fall of water the prow of the canoe could not be kept downstream. It swerved sharply and we came round sideways to the full force of the current. The pole men bent double, desperately wielded their poles, braced themselves against the terrific force of the water, but we were flung up against a rock. The canoe tipped, one side was forced high against the obstruction, the other slowly settled, and the raging waters of the Aruwimi began to pour into the canoe.

My first emotion was one of intense surprise. Actually there was happening to me one of those accidents that happened to other people and very often kill them. Still filled with wonder, I dove out from under the banana leaf shelter. Alice was ahead of me, and we both climbed to the side of the pirogue which was rising higher and higher as the water poured in. If there is one thing that is dinned into your ears in Africa more persistently than the necessity of daily quinine it is the mortal danger of remaining one instant without your helmet until after four o'clock. Mine had been knocked off as I came out from under the roof, and as I climbed to the edge of the rapidly sinking canoe in the midst of this miniature Niagara Falls, my one idea was the terrible danger I ran by sitting in the sun without a helmet. I am very glad I didn't think of the crocodiles. The Aruwimi is famous for them, and there must have been quite a number of large-fanged mouths and greedy bellies swimming about below the rapids. Ben shot one next day not far from the place where we didn't drown.

Meanwhile scenes of wildest excitement were taking place on shore. Natives rushed madly in all directions. Charlie and Ben fled upstream to order a baggage canoe manned and sent down. Blair waited below, where paddlers were assembling to work their way up to us. By a miracle our great dugout stuck on the ledge of rock and held. One of the men fished out my helmet as it began to sail merrily down the Aruwimi, and I hastily jammed it on my head full of water, like the funny man in a movie. The roar of the water was so great Alice and I could not hear each other speak, but as it dawned on us that we were safe, for the moment at least, we began to signal Charlie to get out the telescopic lens and make a picture of the wreck. We ground imaginary cranks but managed to convey only the idea that we were supplicating help. The lower canoe

was now ready and with at least forty paddlers was creeping upstream. And just offshore Gabriel could be seen stripped and up to his waist in water, making fervent demonstrations toward us and issuing loud directions to the rescue canoe.

There was no telling how soon the swirling water would dislodge us and send us catapulting down river toward the far-off Congo; so it seemed quite a long time before that canoe got to us. In the meantime our men braced their poles against bowlders or stood neck deep in water on the rock ledge, holding the canoe with their strong shoulders. But the rescuers arrived at last, took us aboard and over the rapids to safety. Gabriel was waiting. With arms outstretched, eyes closed, he staggered through shallow water and folded first one, then the other of us in a wet, histrionic, and most Gabrielesque embrace. And every phrase for "I told you so" which existed in his native tongue was repeated at least twenty times by the *capita,* who scolded, expostulated, and informed us again and again what the Territorial Agent would have done to him if we had been drowned.

We were forced to make camp in the dreariest, ugliest village on the river and to empty the boxes and trunks of wet clothing, blankets, and mattresses, none of which got dry that night. All the pieces of good luggage we had with us were ruined, the medicine chest useless, and several thousand grains of quinine reduced literally to pulp. The *gîte* was a tumble-down horror, fuller than usual of the scratching feet, and we were glad to set out in the morning, still wet, for Bomili, the post below, where we were to change canoes and paddlers and where we could get properly dried.

Bomili at the mouth of the Nepoko was a doll-like place, beflowered and trim as a little city park. A black *capita* was in

charge. He wore European clothes, had elegant manners and the most inscrutable and sinister face I ever saw. This was an old Arab post, and the natives were all more or less Arabized. As we landed we met long carved canoes crowded with fishermen putting out with nets and spears to fish in the falls of the Nepoko, a river celebrated for its elephants, hippo, and erstwhile cannibals. Incidentally the missionary whose book inspired Vachel Lindsay's "Mumbo-Jumbo, God of the Congo" was drowned in the Nepoko.

Soft-voiced weaver birds chattered and darted among the palms about the *gîte* and the trees were hung with their beautifully woven nests—it is the male weaver, I believe, who has been endowed with the convenient faculty of growing specially fine plumage for the courting-time. And at Bomili we were told that a white elephant hunter was two marches away on the Nepoko, with his wife and baby; that he was a count; that he had a special license to kill as many elephants as he liked; that he had already killed nine, all with large ivory, that he had only killed one with no ivory, that he hadn't killed any.

We knew a count who was shooting elephants in the Ituri accompanied by his wife and baby, and it did not seem likely that there should be two such persons. His wife had been a fellow passenger on the *Kigoma*—an American woman from the middle States with beautiful blue eyes, a soft white skin, and a variety of English accents. In her hat-box she carried the skull of a gorilla, shot, she said, by her husband, and she declared she would not be content unless she had a round dozen of the skulls of this rare and half-human animal to make hat-racks of when she got home. She was going to meet her husband at Stanleyville and had her baby with her. The baby was

not yet big enough to walk, but he had already weathered a previous hunting-expedition in the French Congo!

In the hot twilight of Christmas afternoon in Stanleyville, we had had tea with her and her elephant-hunting count on the veranda of their cottage, where several fair-sized elephant tusks were displayed. There had been much talk about elephant shooting and the relative merits of the eye and ear, to say nothing of nose and throat shots. A little native boy padded back and forth, bringing out the Holland express rifle to be inspected—every so often in Africa you look at somebody's Holland express rifle—bringing out a bullet flattened against an elephant's forehead, bracelets made from the hairs of elephant's tails, snapshots of the count with dead buffalo, dead hippos, dead elephants.

Now, soon after we reached Bomili, a runner came in with a letter from these people, asking us to join them at their camp on the Nepoko. But our one desire was to be out of the forest, and we left Bomili without delay.

This, however, was not quite the last we heard of our elephant-hunting acquaintance. Some ten days later we saw, in the office of an extremely irritated official, five pairs of tiny elephant tusks hardly bigger than hippo teeth. And we learned that the count had sent them in. He explained that he had been charged by these little elephants and was obliged to kill them. "But when," the Agent demanded angrily, "was anybody charged by a whole group of baby elephants? It is absurd. And even if such a thing could happen it would not be either possible or necessary to kill all five. One shot would drive them off. The high officials in Stanleyville are displeased. They believe he killed a baby elephant every time he saw one just for the fun of it, and knowing it is illegal to kill elephants under a certain size, he says it was in self-defense. The officials

are very angry, but he has high-up introductions and I don't know what will be done. Probably nothing."

High officials, high personages, high-up introductions!—Words you hear very frequently in the Congo. Perhaps that is inevitable in a country which began life as a royal estate, or perhaps it is a mere concomitant of Continental bureaucracy. But one cannot help hoping these phrases will become less significant in the Belgian colony as time goes by.

As the river gradually carried us to lower latitudes it became, if possible, hotter, the atmosphere more humid. Although Alice had not yet recovered from her Avacubi fever, she had shown no specially ill effects from the accident. But one day we struck an unusually long portage, and as we trudged doggedly through the tunnel of thin foliage in the atmosphere of a fireless cooker, she began to feel ill. Suddenly, to our horror, she crumpled up in a faint on the trail. Leaving Blair with her, I ran as fast as I could, it seemed to me for miles, along a path plowed with fresh elephant tracks, overtook her boy, got the water flask, and then sent him to the nearest village to borrow the chief's *tipoye*. The water revived Alice, and soon four men arrived with poles but no chair. Deftly they cut palm branches, stripped them, and wove a kind of hammock which was lashed to the poles. On this she was carried to the foot of the rapids. After a battle of words understood by nobody and a pantomime clear to all, we forced the paddlers, much against their will, to set out without the *capita,* who was far behind with the baggage, and proceed to Panga. Alice fortunately had almost recovered before we arrived.

Panga is a post well known to elephant hunters, and an ivory market was going on when we got there. Tall, fierce-

looking chiefs with their wives and villagers were crowded around the trading-post and a half-caste clerk sweated at a table surrounded by elephant tusks. One of the chiefs had blown off his hand with a muzzle-loader. The stump was still bandaged, but he was already negotiating for another gun. One of the traders in Panga was an East Indian, and that evening he called on us. He was very drunk and insisted that we were his brothers and sisters, for was not America, he demanded, once called the India of the West?

Next day was market day and hunters came in from the forest with antelope, fresh and smoked. Food is so scarce that a ticket is issued to each native, permitting him to buy a certain limited amount of meat. Our boys, of course, caused a scandal by securing four whole antelope which later the indignant *capita* came and took away from them.

Since leaving Stanleyville at Christmas we had not seen a newspaper, received a letter, or had word of any kind from the outside world. Moreover, as we had expected to spend only four weeks in the Ituri instead of several months, we had left all our books in Stanleyville. The only reading-matter we had was a New Testament in French, given me by a missionary, and I was now impelled not only to read it, but to read it aloud. This so bored Blair and Alice that they hurt my feelings and then I hurt Blair's—who had attempted to enliven the evening with one of his favorite stories—by reminding him that we had heard it before. All this was like dropping so many matches into a can of gasoline, and for an hour or two an atmosphere of tragedy hung over the Panga *gîte*. After that we no longer wondered at the mysterious accidents which have occurred on certain well-known safaris, when one or more members have been quietly and permanently laid away in the *brousse!* That we three came out of ours better friends than we

went in is a miracle which must be attributable, I can only modestly suppose, to the singular beauty of our natures.

But now with what homesickness I think of Panga, of a white crescent moon climbing a shell-pink sky behind peaked roofs covered with ruffled leaves like old-fashioned ruffled petticoats; of a naked drummer on his high mound, bent forward, his ear close to the lips of his great drum as if listening with some special intentness to the throbbing message he was sending out; of a dance we happened on at night and a gigantic, one-eyed naked black who improvised little steps as light and haunting as a strain of music. . . .

A wait of a day or so at Panga, and then with a double crew of paddlers we were off again on our flying trip down river. We passed houses with the steepest pagoda roofs we had seen—tall houses, but so narrow you couldn't see how people could lie at full length inside them. The temperature mounted till the air was molten lead. Kole, with a red cloth tied about his head, moped, inconsolable, because some one had stolen his handsome black felt hat. He showed no signs of life till a beautifully formed young woman paddled up in her dugout and sold him the head of a smoked fish.

Late one afternoon a voice from behind the forest wall sent out a wailing cry which was answered by our boatmen. Paddles were suspended; we drifted into the glass-green water alongshore. Questions and answers went back and forth, and then one of our men burst into loud lamentations, scrambled out of the canoe, and disappeared in the jungle. Through Gabriel's bad French we learned that this man's father lay dead in the village we were approaching. There was no singing now, and we slipped quietly downstream close to shore. Evening sounds filled the forest, quackings of great birds,

chatterings, barkings. Sweet cool smells threaded through the hot air; the river turned red and the sky too, back of the black forest.

The flimsy rest-house where we put up was near a hippo wallow, and elephants had recently passed. In front of the *gîte* was the biggest track we had seen, measuring, I think, over two feet across. Gabriel and Ipoka fought like demons in some mysterious access of rage. Gabriel stuck his thumb in Ipoka's eye, and then they circled about each other with knives, taking good care not to get too close. All night we heard drumming and shouts from the dead man's village.

We had hoped to get off early next morning, but there was delay because of the death. The chief and all the elders were drunk, bribes and presents did not interest the people, and only threats forced them at last to move our goods. The portage path took us through the village. Crowds were gathered about the house where the deceased lay, surrounded by his women. They raised one of his arms to show us as we passed, and we saw that the hand was eaten away—by leprosy, we supposed. There was an undercurrent of emotion in the air, something dark and held in, waiting only for our departure to break forth, and as we slid out into the river we heard the drums begin and wild fragments of song.

That night our baggage canoe did not catch up with us, and we sat in a little *gîte* on a hilltop for hours without lights, chairs, beds, or food. The floor was alive with enormous, purplish-black shiny worms, each with hundreds of little legs. We had nothing to sweep them away with and didn't want to squash them; so we tried cutting them in two, but this only doubled the number, as the halves walked merrily off and began living their own lives.

It was nearly eleven when the sound of a boat song floated

down to us from above and the baggage canoe arrived. They had been delayed at a portage, so Gabriel and the *capita* assured us, because a crocodile had swallowed a woman porter who had waded out to the canoe. However, this is their story, not mine. . . .

All night the almost naked paddlers sat about a long row of little fires on the high embankment. How they shivered and coughed through the chill damp hours, taking turns at stretching out without covers on a mat, while others tended the fire! But cheerful, friendly, full of an intensity of life, of something closer than we can understand to the earth and sky and forest. You hear it in their music, see it in the movement of their bodies and in their brilliant, dreamy eyes.

Next morning it was barely daybreak when we set out. Forest and river were muffled in white mist, and in the pearl-like light the paddlers began a song which was entirely new to us. The slow tragic notes, full but soft, floated above a throbbing, whispering rhythm, quick as the beating of a heart. It was the death song, they told us, of their tribe.

The sun came up like an orange ball in the mist; prismatic colors bloomed over the jungle. For a long time after the song died away the paddlers did not start another, as if this one had meant something special and they could not turn to anything else. In the utter silence there was only the soft plunging sound of the paddles.

"Your young men shall see visions," it was written in the book I read in Panga, "and your old men shall dream dreams. . . ." But if it is from visions that a future is built, I fear that the young as well as the old of this ancient unprogressive people will only dream dreams.

Chapter 26

BY MOONLIGHT

BEFORE leaving rivers and rapids and dugout canoes, an incident remains to be told, of interest not because we came even nearer being drowned than before, but because of the curious personage who, quite unintentionally, almost caused our demise. Our wide circular tour through the Ituri had brought us back at last to Banalia, to a motor road, and to that first rest-house which we had entered with such fastidious distaste months before. Now how luxurious it seemed to us, and how excited we felt at seeing a shining touring-car whiz through Banalia and a white woman, strolling!—excited because she was a white woman and nicely dressed, not because, incidentally, she carried a monkey on her shoulder and was followed by a baby leopard trotting on wobbling legs!

And it was at Banalia we met de Lima, a Portuguese or rather a half-caste Portuguese, a professional hunter and buyer of ivory, whose fame extended all through the Aruwimi country. He was a young, suave, agreeable person, with what seemed to us mysterious households and mysterious wealth. On the river we had slept in a village belonging to him; he owned what was called a farm in the forest and in Banalia a store, a luxurious bungalow, a glittering automobile, and a palatial canoe equipped with fifty men, in which no less than five im-

mense, reclining library chairs were placed, one behind the other, for the all-night journey he had proposed on the river.

It was moonlight and the expedition was planned in the hope of seeing a herd of elephants bathing. But although we spent a silvery, beautiful, and extremely chilly night on the river we saw no elephants. Dawn had begun to break when we turned back upstream, and clouds of hot white steam rose so thick from the river you could not see the water. In the roaring rapids just below Banalia, the paddlers became confused and lost the channel. They got the canoe halfway up over the falls and then for a perilous hour were unable to get any farther. The force of the water at this point was terrific and if they had lost control of the boat for an instant it would have been swept downstream, turned sideways, and of course swamped. The men fought and struggled, dropped on the gunwales from exhaustion, rested a moment, and fought again. At times nothing but the bamboo pole, the strong back and staunch heart of the man standing in the prow, held the canoe in place, its nose straight to the downward-rushing water. A tall tree alongshore rising above the mist was the signpost of our lack of progress. Sometimes we were opposite to it; sometimes we lost ground and slipped below, fighting our way back inch by inch. The dawn blue of the sky turned to pink, and the swirling steam-clouds warmed us after the piercing cold of the night.

The warm, wet feeling of the stream, the pearl-like clarity of the sky and the changing colors of dawn, the roar of the water which we could not see, the frantic struggles of the paddlers, the fatal tree which refused to mark any forward progress, all blent into a phantasmagoric memory, of which nothing stands out clearly but one thing. When the faithful boatmen had by superhuman efforts got us over the falls into

still water above and I lay back in my great library chair faint with relief, the Portuguese associate of de Lima's who occupied the chair behind me leaned forward to say:

"I've just been back kicking and knocking a few of them down."

"You can't mean the paddlers who have just saved our lives!"

"Certainly. They had no business to make a mistake and get us into the wrong channel." And yet all night long this gentleman had been complaining bitterly because the Portuguese in Africa were usually despised by blacks and whites alike!

The sun had risen when we got back to camp. A truck and a Ford touring-car had arrived to take us into Stanleyville, and the prisoners were waiting to carry down our luggage. We breakfasted on the porch, serenaded for no special reason by a youth who leaned on a pillar playing a kind of violin made of a gourd. Suddenly one of the prisoners, a very old, white-haired man who had the look of a long-past, faded distinction, began feebly to dance to the music—a chief's dance. The fellow prisoner to whom he was attached held up the heavy chain so that it should not weigh too heavily on the neck of the old man, and all the prisoners watched, pleased and flattered that one of their number should be able to display such accomplishments before the whites.

The dancer's eyes were hollow, his hair white, his once powerful frame attenuated and bent. And his dance was the ghost of those other dances, those straddling, triumphant demonstrations we had seen in the villages of the lusty, lustful Congo kings—a touching farewell to our long journey in the antique world of the Ituri.

As we rattled back to Stanleyville we were overcome with a

kind of hysterical gaiety, whether from the fatigue of a sleepless night or as a reaction from the disturbing incident on the river, I do not know. We made fantastic faces at the guileless natives who ran out to the road to look at us, stuck our hands out sideways from our ears, made horns of them, wiggled our tongues. It was fascinating to see the expressions of their faces change from the usual cordial excitement displayed toward friendly whites to a look of amazement, even of stupefaction. Sometimes they were scared and ran away, at others stood as if turned to stone, staring till we were out of sight. Sometimes they imitated what we did, running after the car, repeating our weird gestures. It is to be hoped they did not believe them to be the latest thing in good form among the whites and try them on any of their white masters who might pass that way! The black driver displayed his innate good breeding by maintaining a discreet unawareness of these peculiar demonstrations.

Chapter 27

HIGH PERSONAGES

The rainy season had begun. Most of our few acquaintances in Stanleyville had fever, the hotel was overcrowded as usual, and an imperative need for utter, soundless solitude and repose had overcome me. If I could have it all would be well; if not I should simply disintegrate and breathe my last. This the proprietress regarded as a negligible statement; in any case, she declared, it was out of the question to give anybody a room to him or herself. I, however, investigated the premises and came on what had once been a huge parlor but had long since been abandoned because of a leaky roof and other infelicities. The door opened on to an alley leading to the back of the bar; the windows gave on a dark courtyard where goats, pigs, and chickens, which, for lack of ice, had to be kept on a leash instead of in a refrigerator, created a symphony of smells not easily described. An old, dusty parlor set of green plush was ranged around the walls of the ghostly room; there was a broken-down mechanical piano in one corner and a great heap of blistered rolls of the Turkey trot and earlier periods—"The Merry Widow," "I Can't Get Away to Marry You Today," "The Gaby Glide." A smell of mold and dust filled the place, and the walls and ceiling bore the yellow stains of a dozen rainy seasons. Kole cleaned out the worst of the dirt and cob-

webs, installed my camp bed and steamer chair and a small oil stove in this grizzly room, and I lay there for seven days and nights, drinking warm canned milk and not issuing forth even for meals. Myriads of ants streamed up through the cracks in the board floor and defied the pans of water in which the legs of the combination table and larder were placed. When they couldn't climb they promptly grew wings and flew, and everything was covered with them except the oil stove. My bath was set up, and Kole, when left to his own devices, always filled it with a teapot, making slow pilgrimages clear across the road to the spring for each tiny potful.

A stray baby monkey kept me company. He entered each morning at the window, sidled about the room until he was sure I would not coerce him, then took a flying leap on to my lap and sat there all day, hugging my arm with all his might and main and threatening visitors with furious gibbering. There was no lock or even knob on the door. The first night I tied it shut with string and put various cats and the baby monkey out of the window. Gradually the popping of corks in the bar, shrieking of the phonograph, drunken singing, and occasional illnesses in the alley of two poor pale fellows come in from the *brousse* with a few elephant tusks and a mad thirst for champagne, lights, noise, and an illusion, I suppose, of Europe, were over, and silence settled on the hotel.

The electric lights were officially out at ten, and I rose three times by candlelight to move my bed when whimsical tropic downpours fell through the ceiling. At last the rain stopped, a bit of moonlight struggled through the window, and suddenly, without warning, first one, then a whole string of notes sounded from the piano. Wheezy, out of tune, incredibly ghostly scales and broken arpeggios rang out on my terrified ears. I bounded out of bed, dragging the mosquito net wound

about my head, only to see a troop of fierce-eyed rats scuttle from their nest inside the old pianola. But I find in my diary, "How I LOVE this room. Having it is a real luxury." So luxury can consist of nothing more than solitude, which, on second thought, is probably the greatest luxury of all. Besides, I was reading with particular delight Powys' *Black Laughter,* one of the few books on Africa that are also literature.

Stanleyville had a bad effect on our boys. They behaved rather worse than usual, and Michel, the cook we had fired in December, turned up to infest the hotel, begging for money and a ticket down river. To get the matter straight we took him to the chief of police and to our surprise precipitated the most dreadful scene we had witnessed in the Congo. We explained very calmly that Michel said he had no money although we had not only paid him wages when we discharged him and given him money for a ticket and expenses home, but had also lent him 400 francs. Before we finished the official ran amok. He shouted, stamped his feet, screamed for a soldier who rushed in and began slapping Michel's face. The slapping was stopped long enough for the soldier to find 210 francs on Michel's person, and then he began beating him again. The chief of police never stopped raging at Michel, and when it was over he shouted, "I've told him that if he ever speaks to you again he'll go to the *bloc!*" But Michel turned up as usual at the hotel daily, whining for money.

And now a local high personage honored us with an invitation. A visiting high personage had come out from Belgium and certain excursions about Stanleyville were being organized, in which, if we so desired, we might participate. The first of these was to see the fisheries just below Stanley Falls. Four great pirogues waited there for the official party, each one

commanded by a magnificent chief in red plumes, leopard's teeth, and a government medal—haughty, but delightedly aware of the official solemnity of the occasion. For a moment proceedings were held up because one boatman, shaking with chills and fever, begged me for a quinine pill, and after he swallowed it all the others wanted to feel the spot on his bare stomach beneath which it was probably lodged. Then we pulled out into the warm, steely water under a gray sky. The din of the falls was terrific, water filled the canoes, and we made the last lap up to the fish traps hauling on ropes. Playfully the local high personage pulled on the rope and an admiring murmur circulated among us: *"M. le Commissaire Général* himself pulls the rope!" Then the visiting high personage pulled the rope, and another respectful murmur rustled among the canoes. Impertinently the wild white water sprayed over us and a softly worshipful chorus celebrated the shocking event: *"M. le Commissaire* has wet his feet! Water has fallen upon *M. le Ministre Plénipotentiaire!"*

But we, indirectly, were responsible for even greater *lèse-majesté* the following day. A visit was being made to the native courts of law. We first went to the Arab quarter where a woman's orchestra, the only one I ever saw in Africa, greeted us, and women rushed out, dashing handfuls of rice in our faces. The judges wore robes of brilliant colors, draped with gold-embroidered stoles, and they conducted the trials with great ceremony. Then to the purely native quarter where we were seated on the platform back of a row of particularly wild-looking judges. Never anywhere had we seen such magnificent chiefs, in more barbaric, naked splendor.

The pleading before the court was vehement and, it seemed, eloquent. It concerned a man and wife, a withered crone, a goat. The wife had gone back to her people, and as her hus-

band no longer benefited from her work, it was up to her family to give back to him the dowry he had paid. They did so, but the goat returned was a small, miserable one—the husband pointed to it with derision—while the one they had received from him ten years before had been a handsome, vigorous animal. Witnesses were on hand to testify to this.

While the wonderful plumed judges solemnly debated the case a pallid child belonging to one of the notables shot off a red paper serpent we had given him into the stomach of none other than *M. le Commissaire Général.* The toy was one of those innocent-looking boxes which, when you press a spring, ejects a scarlet snake. We had bought it to astonish a chief. It astonished seven chiefs and created a near riot in a courtroom full of delighted blacks. Also it very much surprised the high personages, who decided, however, to laugh it off.

Then the court was called to order and legal proceedings resumed. The case was decided in favor of the husband, the wife's family being compelled to give him 150 francs as well as the goat.

Lazy days went by in Stanleyville with a cloudburst every afternoon. The clock in the bar said seven minutes to three, the clock outside the post office said four-thirty, the clock inside the post office said twenty minutes past eleven. Nobody cared. We were waiting for the train which leaves twice a month for Lake Tanganyika. We were about to leave the Congo. It had been our original plan to safari eastward to the lake region through what has been called the White Spot west of Kivu—a region, according to the travel books, uncharted and practically unknown. But we had long since discovered that there is no White Spot west of Kivu. Like every other part of the Congo and of Africa that region is perfectly explored, occupied by government outposts and the usual number

of *administrateurs,* Territorial Agents, and what not. There are regular trails and safari routes, and a motor road is under construction. Incidentally I should like to emphasize the fact that one can now cross darkest Africa near the equatorial line entirely by train or steamboat, even cutting down part of the time and distance by flying from Matadi, near the mouth of the Congo to Elizabethville on its headwaters, instead of steamboating all the long way up the river. Trips north and south from the line of mechanical transportation can be made on perfectly well-known and well-policed trails. In a word, the only place I know of where you can be an honest-to-goodness African explorer is in the Sunday supplement.

I do not say that every square inch of the Ruenzoris—sometimes called Mountains of the Moon—has been trod by white feet, but then, neither has every square inch of the Rockies. The topography of Africa is as well known generally as that of the U.S.A., and most of the colonies belonging to European nations are infinitely better policed. The only parts of Africa which may be as dangerous as Chicago are the western border of Abyssinia or perhaps the hinterland of Italian Tripoli. The wildest region of Central Africa is the Lake Edward country, and as long ago as 1924 or 1925 a Swiss lady traveled through there for weeks after her father was killed by a lion, with no other white person on her large safari. And so I advise all prospective African adventurers to buy not the books of returning travelers, but the latest automobile map he can find.

When the time came to part with our boys I am obliged to confess we did so in a burst of regret and actual affection. After all, we'd been through a good deal together, and their atrocities had at least relieved any monotony that might have crept into the days. Sindani put a lyric note into the fare-

wells by exclaiming with what, I think, was real regret, "Never again will my eyes rest on Madami!" We gave them three times too much money, and I wrote high recommendations for them all!

Kole, Ipoka, and Gabriel saw us off. The railroad follows the opposite shore of the Congo from that on which Stanleyville is situated. We crossed the river in pirogues early one morning and boarded the little train which was to take us around falls and rapids to navigable water above. The three Kinshasa youths waved us an ardent and even tearful farewell as, with a shudder, a jerk, a wild squeal from the little whistle, the train got under way and the last lap of the Congo journey was begun.

Chapter 28

THE HISTORIC LUALABA

Although the methods of transportation—steamboats and portage railroads—were the same, yet travel on the upper Congo was not in the least like travel on the lower Congo. There was a different spirit, something younger, gayer, less ridden by officialdom; it was increasingly the spirit of a wild frontier. Possibly, too, the lighter atmosphere had something to do with the difference, as we were steadily climbing to a higher altitude.

We changed from train to boat, from boat to train and back to boat again. Every seat was taken, every cabin filled with gay colonials who devoted themselves to continuous and light-hearted drinking. The steamboats do not, as on the lower Congo, tie up for the night, and in the darkness we moved through a fiery snowstorm of blazing wood-sparks which filled the air, were weirdly reflected in the dark water, and smoldered for several seconds on its surface before going out. On shore native fires glowed, signal drums beat faintly; on board corks popped, phonographs squealed, the passengers drank, danced, and laughed. Occasionally the boat stopped at forest landings where black boys waited with lanterns for unsteady masters who staggered down the swaying planks and disappeared into the bush.

This is an historic stretch of river. Along here old Living-

stone took his thoughtful way, wondering if he had happened on the legendary headwaters of the Nile or if it were the upper reaches of the Niger. Here Stanley's pirogues swept downstream on his epoch-making journey across equatorial Africa from east to west along the route we were taking in inverse direction—a journey that took him three years and cost many lives. Here, before Leopold stepped in, were established the great Arab strongholds and slave stations where the leaders lived in Oriental luxury and the slaves died in such numbers that the hyenas, sated with human flesh, refused to clear away the corpses. And here most of the desperate fighting of the nineties took place, when a handful of heroic Belgians fought and conquered the Zanzibar slavers and their native allies.

At Kindu we missed the train—and the next one would not come for two weeks! We rushed to the station. The clerk laughed heartily at what seemed to him the most diverting episode he had witnessed in Africa. He laughed and laughed. We had quietly sat on deck and let the train slip away with all our baggage on board! The next one wouldn't come for fifteen days, and not a hotel in Kindu, the hottest place in the Congo! It was indeed droll. When he had enjoyed the joke to the fullest he told us merrily that he had an uncle in Pasadena and that American people ate a great deal of candy.

We left this playboy while some self-control still remained to us and found a higher official. They must, we insisted, telephone ahead to hold our train and rent us an engine with which to overtake her. Every hair of his bureaucratic head stood on end. He refused fifty times and then got us the engine and even attached to it a small private car in which we tore through the jungle after the departing express. An hour later we caught up. The passengers greeted us with cheers. A young justice of the peace with an innocuously turned-up nose and

far too little chin for Africa, who was returning to a post in the Kivu country, emerged from the grilling buffet and hung unsteadily on the door of our compartment. He wanted to congratulate us on our happy return to our friends, but he was convinced that Blair was angry with him: "Tell that gentleman not to be angry with me. I am not a bad fellow, but he is angry. Tell him, implore him not to be angry." He wept.

One noon we stopped for water at a steep staircase that led up through the matted vegetation to a spring and hurried ashore to visit the mission of an old English couple highly recommended by the Belgians on board as being "not like the other missionaries." They had been on the lower Congo when Stanley was there and had later come to this station where they lived alone, doing, I fancy, little proselytizing. She was the cleanest, sprightliest old white-haired lady in the world, spouting floods of native talk to her boys; he a small, patriarchal, snowy-bearded old man. They were dears, and our hearts ached for them. His whole interest lay in completing a Bantu vocabulary, but the home church in England, he said, wanted to close the station and send them away. He was aflame with eagerness for his work and what he believed to be his discovery—"the movement of the vowels up and down"—whatever that might be. "Where could we go? Where could we live? How could I finish my dictionary and grammar?" And they looked about their flowery, peaceful mission in dismay. Africa is all they know and care for, and we couldn't bear to think they might be forced to leave it for an old age of penury in England.

For five days the everlasting forest was with us, literally swarming with swinging troops of red monkeys and black and white Colobus monkeys. Then at last the ascending valley took us into open country. A vast glare of sunlight lay over

the wide, scorched veldts and glassy river. Hippos grazed down below, in the cool marine shadows under the water, and now and then their flat, preposterous noses were thrust above the surface to breathe. Evening brought no relief from the heat until purple clouds shot through with lightning piled up in the east, bringing cool gusts of wind. Ladies sat on their husbands' laps, singing "The Merry Widow," and a few lights glimmering on shore ahead meant that for us the river journey was over. This was Kabalu, a junction point on the Cape-to-Cairo route, where we were to take the train to Tanganyika Lake.

Here, for the first time in Africa, our eyes lighted on a party of American tourists, of some interest because of the singular air of gloom and fury that enveloped the little band. There were quite a number of them, young, middle-aged, and very old, and they were in charge of a startling young Englishman in the shortest shorts, the bushiest bush shirt, the widest and newest sombrero, that ever came out of Nairobi on a would-be white hunter.

It was, we learned, a miscellaneous party collected by one of the big tourist agencies to do the Cape-to-Cairo trip. Something had gone wrong. They had come up the Nile, been switched to Nairobi, rushed out of Africa at Mombasa, back into Africa at Dar-es-Salaam, brought up over the Tanganyika railroad to this place, and were now going out by way of the Cape. They had seen nothing, one of them furiously declared, shot nothing, done nothing. Not one of the party was on speaking terms with anybody else, and they lived only to get out and get home before they slit each other's throats. Before we could hear any more of the gruesome details they were herded on to the boat to continue their journey southward up the Congo.

Eight days after leaving Stanleyville we reached the wind-blown, sun-dried, rain-washed town of Albertville, straggling along an unpaved road beside Tanganyika Lake. There was a mile of shops where almost everything one brings at great expense from New York, Paris, Bordeaux, and Kinshasa can be bought. There was a chalk-white new hotel with the wonders of thick mattresses, clean sheets, filtered coffee, and deep-cushioned easy-chairs on a veranda facing blue Tanganyika. There were Hindus, Goans, Arabized blacks, blacks, white babies riding on the heads of devoted *buoyees*—surely the kindest nurses in the world. And when the rain poured down straight and loud all morning there was a little crowd of colonials in the bar drinking warm beer and brandy.

After a wait of several days the steamboat which was to take us across Tanganyika Lake to British Africa arrived. Our last night in the Congo had come. The bar—office, lobby, and parlor of Congo hotels were always the bar—was crowded, the billiard table in full swing, the hotel blazing with lights and full of convivial sounds. But back of these little noises was the lovely silence of new places. The peace of the high valley was as yet unbroken by the din and tumult which sooner or later follow in the footsteps of the restless races.

Chapter 29

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

I HAD arrived at an interesting conclusion the night before, a conclusion which had seemed to me at the time to be of rather surprising importance. It did not explain the whys and wherefores, the inexplicable justices and injustices, sufferings and joys of human life, but arranged them, I thought, into a reasonably tenable and stimulating hypothesis. We were sitting on the deck of the boat which was taking us across Lake Tanganyika to Kigoma. The Congo was nothing but a quiet, grape-colored rampart against a sky which blazed with the clean, high colors of what was almost a northern sunset. Then the stars came out, no longer moisture-smudged but sharp as sword-points, and later the moon rose bright as a ringing bell. And this crystal brilliance, after the brooding heaviness of the forest, was absurdly exhilarating, gave birth, doubtless, to that easy solution of all earthly perplexities. Or perhaps it was the result of so many months spent away from civilization's innumerable activities. In the forest there is little to turn the attention out rather than in. One reflects in spite of oneself, and seems to see around corners—long views that result in a feeling rather than a thought. And one arrives at conclusions. At least I thought I had in the dark blaze of the Tanganyika night. But next day I could not remember what on earth the solution had been, and

all the way to the ancient and dishonorable village of Ujiji, where we were going to see the famous Stanley-Livingstone tree, I kept trying and failing to bring it back.

Ujiji was once the greatest Arab slave market in Africa and is now a large, straggling, dreamy town of Arabized natives about half an hour's run from Kigoma. A Goan or a Hindu or something rented us a car and we flew along a beautiful road above the sapphire floor of Tanganyika. The green-gold of the vegetation was pure sunlight, there were snowy breezes from the lake, and in the sunny shadows of Ujiji natives passed in Mahomedan robes of buttercup-yellow and white, with red fezzes on their heads. The girls were exquisite with gold rosettes in their noses, straight features, radiant eyes, wound in draperies that outlined their bodies and floated capelike from their shoulders. They were all young and beautifully small and slender. The strange old city seemed to belong to nothing else in the world, to have no relation in time to what is today.

An abandoned clay road took us down to the lake shore, to an ancient tree fenced by railway rails and cement posts in disrepair. There, over half a century ago, Stanley, worn with incredible hardships, found at last the patriarchal adventurer he had been seeking for many weary months and uttered the most inadequate greeting on record: "Dr. Livingstone, I believe?"—and inaugurated, with these words, modern history in Central Africa.

Back in Kigoma, as we hurried down the station platform, our ears were assailed by an accent which can emanate from no spot on earth but the immediate vicinity of Boston. Two very old but agile ladies pursued us: "Are you Americans?" cried the voices. "We thought so and we wanted to find out where you've been and where you're going and all about you."

Which, without the voices, would have made us quite certain of their nationality.

They, it seemed, had traveled from the upper Nile to Lake Victoria Nyanza and down to Kigoma by truck and construction train, and were going out by way of the Cape. Before that they had been in Morocco, Persia, Arabia, Borneo, and points east and west. They hadn't been in Boston for five or maybe it was ten years. "We're just drifting through Africa," they merrily remarked. "People say you can't do this and you can't do that, but we just do it. Good-by, good luck, nice to see some Americans," and back they went up the platform—just drifting.

This railroad crosses East Africa from Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika to Dar-es-Salaam on the Indian Ocean. The very excellent train, manned by a cosmopolitan personnel—Scotch conductor, English engineer, Rhodesian fireman, Hindu cook, Greek steward, Maltese baggage master, native waiters—took us in two days to Dodoma, whence we were to safari northward across the Tanganyika plateau. It was amazing to be out of a land of French and Flemish into one where white men spoke English, out of a world of suspenders and ill-fitting khaki into one ruled by the most notoriously well-dressed men on earth. For by a method best known to British statesmen, German East Africa emerged from the late war a British mandate, although large numbers of Belgian troops fought and died there right gallantly. But doubtless poetic justice would have it that the greatest game-fields left in the world should fall to a race of sportsmen rather than of buoyee scoots who shoot crocodiles *boum poof* from the tops of ant hills.

We had only two weeks left in Africa, and we wanted to spend them on a sight-seeing tour among the animals. We were not hunters—Ben, who was, having remained in the

Congo—and our purpose was chiefly pacific. But as the best of purposes are apt to be a little mixed, and as we were armed with very inviting rifles, I presume there lurked in the back of every mind the possibility of satisfying the inscrutable human lust for taking life. I myself, even before leaving Europe, had cherished vague designs on the person of a rhinoceros. But as I had never shot anything larger than a gopher (and that accidentally) this seemed a dubious aspiration. On the whole, any ideas of shooting we may have had were entirely by the way. We were not big-game hunters and we knew it. Our real desire remained, as I have said, simply to see the vast, ancient menagerie of East Africa.

Dodoma is an engaging post, blazing with scarlet flowers and shaded by feathery gray-green trees brought from the East. On the veranda of the gay, neat little hotel a squealing phonograph played "My Gypsy Sweetheart," portraits of the King and Queen of England hung on the walls, and in the official register we read: "Name: C. Blank. Port of Arrival: Dar-es-Salaam. Destination: God Knows!" In no hotel with portraits of the King and Queen of the Belgians on the wall would any person dare treat so lightly an official register. Moreover, C. Blank was the white hunter who was supposed to accompany us into the game country. He had not, however, turned up, and in his place went a little man who would always know precisely where he was going and would expect to tell God a great deal more than he asked Him. This was Schwarz, a German, owner of the small touring-car and two trucks in which we were to cross Tanganyika Territory.

At high noon we set forth into what I have vowed, sworn, and pledged myself never to call "the blue." To Schwarz, who had been an officer in the late war, every turn of the road brought a reminiscence of the fighting; here they had been

ambushed, there a hundred corpses of native soldiers had swung from trees—and from the speed at which he habitually drove he seemed to be under the impression that the war was still on and we German generals flying for our lives. Eyes glued to the roar, hands gripping the wheel till his knuckles turned green, he sent the Chevrolet bounding from rut to rut like a scared jack rabbit. Guinea fowl and grouse were as thick along the road as pedestrians on Broadway, and when they rose whirring from the bush, Schwarz would shout, "Why don't you shoot?"—doubling his speed at the same moment. Antelope and gazelle flitted like shadows among the sparse trees, but there was no time for even a glimpse at them.

It was a wide, semi-arid country spreading to limitless horizons. At sunset we slid down over an escarpment into a vast tawny plain. Parklike clumps of trees were scattered here and there, diminished to nothingness by the immensity of the vista; hills were piled up in the blue distance. Not one, but two great rainbows curved from sky to earth, and the whole scene was washed in a rose-gold light, the white-gold clouds riding the sky as if they had come fresh from creation. Schwarz pointed out what he said were herds of zebra some distance away, but we had seen too many animals on leashes to be able as yet to believe him. And here, beside a thorn-protected native hut, we made our first camp.

The second day we traveled through a biblical landscape—bare hills, fat baobab trees, trim umbrella trees—and at night camped in the beautiful old Arab town of Kondoa-Irangi in a wild fig and cypress grove. Here an English gentleman kindly showed us the civic garden and other public improvements, but what we wanted to see was his beautiful Syrian wife, who lived, we were told, in exotic seclusion. The third day the road climbed and climbed to a high ridge from which, far below, we

caught glimpses of the floor of the world, the Masai steppes, spreading away over the edge of everything into a misty beyond. We followed this ridge for some time through an open, sunny forest and then dropped down into the Rift Valley and the curtain went up on the great African Ringling's which covers half a continent and dates back to the flood.

First it was ostriches. Schwarz, who managed to look up from his wheel long enough to rake the flying landscape with a stern and hasty glance, suddenly swerved off the road, and we began rocking over the veldt after a flock of ostriches. It was amusing, he said, to watch them run. Maybe the great brown hens and black he-birds did look funny careening over the plain with long necks stretched forward, pink thighs working like maniacal scissors, wings lifted in a kind of half flight, but I was focused on impending death from a motor crash and did not think anything funny. Then, as suddenly, he swerved back to the road and tore on. We must reach camp, it seemed, in time to kill something for the men's supper, probably a gnu.

As we tore along the dusty road past scurrying guinea fowl and whirring grouse, I caught sight, in a small thicket, of an antelopelike creature with horns unlike any we had seen, and pointed it out to Schwarz. He suddenly went mad, slammed on the brakes, shouted that it was a lesser kudu—rare in this region—and for somebody to get his gun. Then Schwarz led rapidly off in the opposite direction from that in which I saw the kudu melt away. But he did not take kindly to advice and so that lesser kudu remained, happily, in possession of its interesting head.

The sun was halfway down the western sky when we reached a dusty little ravine. There was the dry bed of a stream, all sand and strewn bowlders, with two or three neat umbrella

trees leaning gracefully toward it. These trees always look as if a gardener had just groomed them, and they give a domesticated touch to the wild and desolately beautiful Tanganyika scene. Brown plains spread away, the hills were pearl-colored and as thin and hard as shadows. A half dozen ragamuffins dressed in filthy white Mahomedan robes spilled off the trucks —boys whom Schwarz had hastily assembled and who were not only the best servants we saw in Africa but as good as good servants anywhere. We left them in this dry place to make camp—from now on we were to know all the discomforts of far too little water and far too much dust—and ourselves went bounding away over the grassy plain in the Chevrolet.

I do not remember the exact moment at which the scene changed from a mere monotonous prairie to a pre-flood spectacle which exceeded anything we expected or could have imagined. But quite suddenly we became aware that these plains, which from a distance look so starkly empty, were alive. They teemed with animals, with every kind of creature you ever saw in a picture book with funny names under their portraits. All were peacefully grazing. Wildebeestes, more engagingly known as gnus—gray, shaggy-headed monsters which looked like the prehistoric cattle drawn on rock walls by cavemen. Whole gaudy bands of zebra in their smart prison stripes, the gayest, best-groomed people in the animal world. Red kongoni or hartebeestes with their homely long faces and absurd horns. And singly, flitting about among the herds or grazing in small bands, were delicate gazelles of every size and color—Grants, their rich red-gold and white set off with almost black lines; Tommies, with twinkling tails; impalla with all the elegance of their elongated, needle-pointed horns.

Schwarz, by a triumph of self-control, allowed us a moment to gaze and then charged down on a herd of gnus. At first

they raised their massive heads and stared—curious, and, it was plain, puzzled. We were up wind and instinct had no warning for them against automobiles. But as we came nearer they turned and began to walk, joined by some zebra, then to trot, and at last, wildly, to gallop. We tore after them, laboring over bumps and ruts like a ship in a heavy sea. Clinging for dear life to the running-board were two natives carrying knives to slit the throat of the animal after it was shot so that it should be fit for good Mahomedans to eat. Suddenly the brakes ground, Schwarz shouted, somebody jumped out of the car and shot (it is illegal, I am glad to say, to shoot any but predatory animals from a car). A gnu stumbled, plunged, and kicked, then raced on with the herd. Galloping, they looked like old prints of our own American bison.

It was a fine sight to see them streaming across the plain, the bulls angry, snorting, and pawing the ground with their front feet as they ran. Again the car was wrenched to a standstill, again someone leapt out and shot at the wounded beast. He fell, struggled fearfully to rise. Another shot and he was still. The natives rushed on him with their knives and we continued in pursuit of the herd, Schwarz shouting that he had seen a record head and we must get it. On raced the wildebeestes; doggedly the rocking, bouncing Chevrolet pursued. At last the herd, winded perhaps, or perhaps merely overcome by curiosity, stopped at what they supposed to be a safe distance and turned to stare. Furtively one of us lurked from cover to cover while the gnus, standing motionless with lowered heads, in sharp silhouette against the clear sky, remained as if spellbound by their fatal curiosity; the patriarch, aggressive, in the foreground.

There was the sudden mild bang of the Mannlicher, a sound almost annihilated by the great space about us. The smallness

of the sound and the distance at which the gnus were standing made it seem strange that the rearing plunge of the great bull could have any relation to the gun. He raced on with the others, but it was plain he had been hit, and another shot knocked him over. His back was broken. His hindquarters lay prone and lifeless on the ground while he supported his great shaggy shoulders on his forefeet, struggling wildly to rise. Another shot, and his record head sank mercifully to earth.

As we hurried off in pursuit of a band of hartebeestes I happened to perceive a small gray-gold antelope folded up like a kitten and hiding in a small clump of thorn. Thoughtlessly I exclaimed, and to my intense regret the car swerved; somebody leaped to the ground with a rifle. The delicate little creature bounded from his ambush and was off like the wind, escaping, thank goodness, the bullets that spattered after him.

As we pursued the kongoni up a long slope, suddenly there materialized on top of the bare ridge four fabulous creatures as tall as the Eiffel Tower and just about the same shape. They were giraffes, looking jet-black and ten times as big as any giraffe could be, outlined against the sunset sky. Coyly and affectedly they peered down at us, and then seeming to lose interest, as suddenly disappeared—the prologue to the whimsical giraffe motive that ran all through our brief zoölogical symphony.

Now the whole plain was in motion. Galloping herds swept back and forth in all directions, bands of antelope flew like leaves blown by the wind. We charged about, crashing through thorn thickets that wrought havoc with the tires, carrying on our bloody business. Another possible record head, an impalla, I think, was brought down, and then, I regret to say, a zebra was shot—I don't know why, as we did not need bait that night.

She fell, a mother with a little colt. The whole herd waited for her, and when she got to her feet they put her at the head of their band and raced away. But they couldn't keep her there. See how her clean black and white coat streams with bright, dark blood! She falters, sinks. The others linger as long as they dare, then leave, all except the colt, a round, charmingly plump little creature with brighter stripes than anybody and a curly mane like a pony in a show. He lingers near, too innocent to be afraid of anything except leaving his mother. Unprotected, he will fall to so mean a foe as a hyena or even a wild dog! She seems to realize it, and even after another shot she raises her sad head, desperately looks toward her colt and toward the herd, which is hesitating now a safe distance away —then dies. How shocking it is! Fortunately the sun had now set and we turned back to camp, passing the two natives who sat with heads muffled, holding long knives, beside the first gnu, waiting to be told to cut it up. Later they came into camp with a pole on their shoulders, the meat speared along it *en brochette*.

Our hunting had taken us far across the plain. Immediately and swiftly on the going down of the sun it had become night. Only pale light rimmed the western horizon against which the distant hills, lately so shadowy, now loomed heavy and black as ink. The vast arch of the sky was spattered with ice-sharp stars, but they cast no light on the ground, and we moved slowly over the uneven prairie among the clumps of thorn.

Outside the bright path of our headlights all was a well of darkness except when Schwarz turned his searchlight to right or to left. Instantly hundreds of pairs of gleaming green eyes appeared. The veldt literally blazed with these living jewels. Some were high from the ground, others close to it, others halfway between. What were they? What dark forms, in-

visible except for their steady, glittering eyes, stared at us in the black night? Jackals, hyena, antelope, leopards? A little wind blew from nowhere, and far away sounded the deep vibration of a lion's roar, scarcely a sound in its own right, more like the voice of the night itself, the menace of the African night. Although we saw lions in all their kingly splendor in the bright light of day, the only way we heard their voices was thus, from far away, in darkness, when it filled the eardrum—a feeling rather than a sound, a hollow tremor of the air borne on night winds, proclamation of triumph and death.

Dawn came, cool, gray, and opalescent. Foxlike, silky jackals, overtaken by daylight, slunk away from camp, and in a sparse grove near the kill we saw hyenas, with their rough, mangy coats, high forequarters, brutal jowls—sullen, sullied beasts with something about them of the wolf, the hog, the cur. Fear-driven and savage, they lurked and darted among the twisted trees, soon vanishing to wait in some safe hiding-place till night should come again.

Over the carcass of the slain zebra a black, iridescent robe seemed to be spread. It rose as we approached and turned into a cloud of vultures, darkening the air above us. They soared like angels on smooth, wheeling wings and then, reassured, sank gracefully to their prey. But, angel-like in the air, they no sooner touched earth than they became revolting and horrible clowns. They hopped and snatched and danced a greedy, gloating dance on the stripped and bloody skeleton. Their shoulders were humped, their beaks half open, their wings partly spread as they minced and sidled in lascivious anticipation.

Of the zebra very little had been left to the vultures. It had been entirely dismembered, the inside of head and torso eaten, bones crushed, and legs carried entirely away. It was easy to

imagine the carnival of snarling horror that must have taken place there in the darkness!

Heaven, we were later to see, and hell, succeed each other regularly every twenty-four hours in Africa. Daytime Africa is the Garden of Eden. For twelve hours it is Paradise of the pre-serpent period. In the cloudless sunlight, under blue, unimpassioned skies, the pastoral creatures wander in all their innocence. Peace reigns. Zebras whinny and play; side by side all the families and species of the grass-eaters pasture with no dark thoughts of war against each other. They are pacifists; they are, with all due respect, Christian Scientists; they see, speak, think no evil. Like Niapu's wives, there is no hatred in their hearts. Then night comes, bringing hell, bringing the killers with their implacable ferocity, and death. Is it eating flesh that has brought wickedness into the world instead of the good old biblical Root of Evil?

Chapter 30

GIRAFFES AND OTHER THINGS

It was a blond, high day; the sunlight was diffused and golden, and you could see a long way in every direction. The prairie road climbed gently swelling hills, passed through sparse sun-filled woods, crossed rivers empty of water, their dry bowlder-strewn beds unnaturally exposed and terribly lifeless. Away off the azure shaped itself into mountains that were like clouds or clouds that were like mountains. And all about us the sunny shadows of the groves were constantly resolving themselves into living forms, into the charming and innocent natives of this wide, still, morning world.

Here, at first glance, is just an acacia woods. But there is something in the look of it that is not quite right. Long, muscular-looking, denuded branches seem to rise above the low, neatly spreading trees; they lean against each other, cross each other at strange angles. They are absolutely motionless, but they are not branches, for they have heads, flat silly heads. They have great ears and minute horns like stubby, pointing fingers. These heads are incredibly out of proportion to the long necks which swell downward to a spotted body not long enough from its high shoulders to its sharply slanting rump. Almost you might have missed seeing it, so exactly is it the color of the tawny scene. And the car comes quietly to a standstill, for

Schwarz knows that his inexplicable and chronic haste must give way before the enchanted spectacle of the giraffes.

Languidly, then, the long crisscrossed necks parted and as many flat faces peered down at us from above the trees. I think the fairylike impression these creatures make comes partly from the odd effect of seeing the woods full of animals all taller than the trees. One big fellow stood near the road, his neck bent forward, nibbling from the little roof garden of green. When we stopped he lifted a surprised-looking face and simpered down at us, while we stared admiringly up at him. A zebra standing beside him seemed to reach about to his ankles. Nothing can describe the complacency of that flat head with its large, wide-spreading ears and tiny, inadequate horns. The silly fellow was not twenty yards from us, but, as we did not move or get out of the car, he was not afraid. After a long, long look at us he moved his little head and focused on the truck with the same mild, affected curiosity. He and most of the others were twice as large as giraffes you see in zoos, and of much finer color. It surpassed, indeed, in depth and brilliance, that of the leopard—a gorgeous red-brown, softening into gold or fawn, the spots dazzlingly white and rimmed with black. The younger ones were pale gold or fawn, a color as full of light as that of the shadowiest gazelle.

At last this elegant, tall gentleman became bored with us. Turning, with his funny, short tail curved up over his rump, he got his incongruous members into motion and sauntered away. But now, with his back turned and no longer able to see us, he lost confidence. His pace quickened; he broke into a long, straddling, lopsided, leisurely gallop. He cantered up and down, his long neck undulated, he was a gigantic rocking-horse sired by a boa constrictor. You thought he was going to tip over, you thought he would break his neck on the trees, you couldn't

see how he got on at all or why he existed. At a safe distance from the road curiosity overcame him and he wanted to look again. So he picked out an acacia tree that reached about to his shoulder and hid behind that, feeling perfectly safe in his ambush with only six or eight feet of neck and his blah little face sticking up above him.

Farther along we came on a herd of about eighteen giraffes. They were of all sizes—children, pale-gold adolescents, youths and maidens of marriageable age, a couple in the prime of life, and one magnificent old bull of a gorgeous brown-gold so deep it was almost black. After we had stared at each other a long time, the giraffes decided to move on. The young bull took the lead, the others wonderfully ranged themselves in couples for all the world like a wedding procession, and with the patriarch bringing up the rear, went mincing off in a long diagonal across the road and into the woods. A herd of zebra, their well-groomed black and white coats shining like new paint, had been feeding in the background. The going of the giraffes inspired them too to move, and they now drifted quietly off behind the stately procession.

A purple volcano rose in the north, and beyond that bloomed the great white flower of a snow mountain. The road led upward from a vast plain through twisted, rocky ravines. In one of these near the roadside, a small tarpaulin was stretched from a low tree to the rock wall, and as we passed, two young men hailed us from the rude camp. They were South Africans, one a professional rhino-hunter, the other a planter. They had driven back from the road a little way into the bush that morning, and their small open truck had been charged by two rhinos and put out of commission. They killed the rhinos and displayed a huge horn, the largest, Schwarz grudgingly admitted, he had

ever seen. Rhino horn, it seems, is just hair grown together. It is a dark gray-yellow in color and is a profitable article of commerce. The hunter was a handsome youngster with an engaging manner and the most beautiful speaking voice I have ever heard, but the fact that he was a professional rhino-hunter roused Schwarz to perfect transports of disdain. Individuals engaged in such a pursuit were, he seemed to believe, no better than rascally vagabonds, and he contemptuously refused them the lift on one of our trucks they asked for.

We continued to climb through a wild, desolate scene. Already the sun was setting, and for some reason the thought of lions came into my mind. "This is the kind of place," I said to Schwarz, "where I have always supposed lions lived." And by a pleasant coincidence he was able at that precise moment to say, "It is, and there they are."

There, indeed, they were, six or seven—opinion was divided as to the number—great yellow beasts standing in a most pictorial group by the trail, but scarcely seen before, without any undignified appearance of haste, they disappeared into the bush. Our subsequent limited experience with lions proved that they are never, under any circumstances, capable of being undignified.

As night had come we were obliged to make camp here in a fold of the hills. There was no water at this place, but it was nevertheless an agreeable camp. We ate under the umbrella trees, waited on in irreproachable style by two men servants, one in an undershirt and fez, the other in a decayed felt hat with a feather in it. The cook had a swollen eye, still bleeding from a blow given him by Schwarz. Schwarz was under the impression that Tanganyika Territory was going to the dogs because the British officials would no longer permit you to beat the niggers. What he called the daily face-punching he in-

dulged in, I do not know. "The English beat them all right in Kenya, which they own," complained the probably prejudiced Schwarz, "but here they're making up to the natives. They want to get their hands on Tanganyika Territory for keeps, and when they apply to the League to make it a colony instead of only a mandate, they want the niggers to back them up. But wait till they get hold of it and then watch them take it out of these rascals!" But then, Schwarz bitterly regretted the by-gone time when his own *Kultur* and discipline reigned in Tanganyika.

The cook was accompanied by a diminutive wife swathed in white robes and a Mahomedan veil. Habitually she knitted in the outdoor kitchen, which consisted of a camp fire and a thorn-bush hung with pots and kettles. But when her husband had been beaten she did not knit; she wrapped her head in her veil and sat all day with hidden face proclaiming sympathy and reproach.

Horns and heads were put out in the sun, skins staked down, drying and smelling vilely. Vultures soared or watched from neighboring trees, hawks menaced the parrots and terrified monkey. The trucks had to bring water from a stream a long way off, and during our stay here we were never clean. Each morning our extremely soiled but priceless boys stepped softly into the tents with muddy coffee, and from that moment until bedtime their vigilant attention to our comfort, in so far as it lay in their power to contribute to it, never for an instant failed. And for their pains they had their faces frequently punched by Schwarz.

Schwarz had, in the past, killed his lions and buffalo and had the distinction of having been scared to death by a herd of charging elephants from which he miraculously escaped. But his hunting had been more or less by the way. As to the best

methods of conducting tenderfeet on a sight-seeing tour among the animals, he was quite in the dark. He had never heard of a *boma* or that gentlemen and even ladies who at home have not shot so much as a wild duck return from Africa with a dozen lions safely potted from behind the thorn hedge, calling themselves big-game hunters. But we wanted to see night life on the veldt; so we explained what a *boma* was and asked him to make us one.

Fever visited us at this camp, and when the time came, only two of us were well enough to go to Schwarz's *boma.* It was a long way to the place he had selected. We took our way in pitch darkness through thickets into which, the night before, we had seen the seven lions disappear, flashing out searchlights to keep prowlers away. Schwarz walked ahead, swathed in a plaid shawl and carrying a small pistol! He owned a Mauser rifle but had no ammunition, and although we lent him a Mannlicher he preferred, he said, his revolver. As we climbed a steep hill, we picked up three pairs of gleaming green eyes above us which made it extremely unpleasant to continue going up, but nevertheless we went.

The so-called *boma* we found on the top of a windy, desolate hill. It consisted of a few dried thorn twigs thrown about in a circle which any lion or half a lion could walk across without even noticing. Our lights brought the gaudy stripes of the stark, dead zebra, laid out as bait, into brilliant relief against the blackness. Its stomach had already been torn and the sad wind wafted toward us the smell of entrails and blood.

We sat down on the ground, Schwarz holding his pistol, the native who was with us staring off into the night, one smooth-muscled arm and thigh bare where his one-piece garment had slipped away. All around the circle of the horizon green eyes gleamed, but strangely enough there was not a sound, except

occasionally when a dark form scuttled past, brushing the thorns. A soft rain fell for a while, then cleared, and the late moon rose. The wind went whispering back and forth across the veldt; away off a lion roared faintly and there was the remote yelping of hyenas. What these watchful forms were that ringed the kill without approaching, we did not know.

"Why don't hyenas come?" we whispered to Schwarz.

"I don't know."

"Are they usually quiet when lions are about?"

"Yes."

"Do lions take a long time to creep up to the kill?"

"Yes. Sometimes when dawn comes they are still crouching in the grass."

"Do they ever charge a *boma?*"

"I don't know."

"Is this *boma* sufficient protection?"

"I don't know."

It was cold and, except for the strangeness of the stealthy, death-filled African night, uninteresting, and I finally went to sleep. I do not know why I woke up. But simultaneously with my awakening I dimly saw the bare, brown arm of the native, raised silently to point at a large animal crouching some distance from us. It was up wind and could not smell us, nor had there been any sound or light to frighten it away. Suddenly it began to bound toward the *boma,* taking long easy leaps, its pads falling softly but heavily on the hard earth. Schwarz gasped, "Lion," sprang to his feet, casting away plaid shawl and—most inappropriately—his cocked pistol, and tried to hold a searchlight on the approaching animal. But his arm was too unsteady to focus the light before the creature, whatever it was—probably not a lion—swerved away out of sight. This incident, together with the conversation preceding it, left

A WARUSHA CEREMONY OF INITIATION INTO WOMANHOOD

CAUCASIAN NOSE AND ASIATIC EYES

us with so little confidence in our chaperon that we decided to go back to camp. We retraced our two-mile walk through the dark underbrush, I, at least, feeling extremely scared. Though I suppose even if there were a lion behind every bush we were in reality quite safe, as they do not, it is said, attack men unprovoked.

The camp slept under serene gray moonlight, we stumbled over horns and heads, and above us the sky was so deep, so clear, you were afraid to look for fear of falling in.

Next morning dishes and pots and kettles stood about unwashed, basins and baths were empty, and there was no water in the canteens. About the unclean camp flies gathered in more infuriating millions than usual. At last the delayed water truck appeared, and from the seat beside the young German driver, Blair descended in a state of excited disappointment.

When he set out that morning he had taken a shotgun and his Winchester rifle. Unfortunately there had been something the matter with the Winchester and several people had fixed it. The result of this fixing was that only one cartridge could be put in at a time and the gun had to be turned upside down before it could be got out.

Thus armed he had ridden peacefully along, holding the shotgun and looking out for birds. Suddenly the chauffeur shouted "Lions," and there, in the full glow of the morning sun, Blair saw thirteen gorgeous lions crossing the road right under his nose. By the time he could put down the shotgun and grab the rifle which the driver in his excitement got mixed up in the steering-wheel, all but the last lion had loped along out of sight. Blair shot and wounded that one and was then maddeningly unable to fire until the setting-up exercises had been performed on the rifle. Meantime the lion fell, picked

himself up, and disappeared in thick brush, into which Blair had not felt disposed to follow him.

Any one who wanted to could, he said, go into the thicket after the wounded lion. He himself did not care to do so, having just read a book in which two young Englishmen—brothers—did that very same thing and never came out alive. Very nice fellows too. He also suggested that whoever did go in remember there were twelve other lions around somewhere. The fringes of the thicket were afterward gingerly searched but the lion never found.

It was strange to see, scattered among the wild herds that so thickly peopled this wilderness, troops of little humpbacked cattle belonging to the natives, for the Masai, Warusha, and kindred tribes of this region, have from remotest times owned and domesticated cattle. Their goats and herds are, in fact, to them what the buffalo were to our plains Indians—food, shelter, and clothing. In a country teeming with game it is tabu for them to eat anything but the flesh of their beeves; they drink the blood and the milk, grease their bodies with the fat, wear the skins, build their *bomas* with the dung of their cattle.

Often, far out on the veldt, we came across one of these tiny villages. Almost invisible it was, so close did it lie to the bosom of the vast plain. The low, windowless houses were mere snail-shaped mounds built of clay and dung smeared over a framework of wattles—mud pies caked and, as it were, flattened by the stark sunlight. They were not high enough for a man to stand upright inside, and you had to enter the one door almost on your hands and knees. These houses joined each other around a circular corral into which the cattle were driven at night, the entrance stopped with thorn branches to

keep the lions out. No trees spread their shade over this ring of mole-like burrows; often they were far from water. They had no grace but the ever-present beauty of far vistas, of emptiness, of the scorched plains spreading away to those castellated and ambiguous horizons where the hills were only deeper shadows in the blue. It seemed incredible that human life could go on in such denuded surroundings; that human beings could be born, live, love, and die there. But they do and have achieved not only a curious physical beauty but style—a certain air of distinction, even of sophistication, something elusive and ancient.

The tall young men stood about during our visit, leaning on even taller spears, smiling, polite, utterly indifferent even to the presents we had to offer. They were almost always handsome, with Caucasian noses and Asiatic eyes, and were covered from head to foot with henna-colored paint. The single garment they wear, a skin or cloth knotted on one shoulder and leaving one whole muscular side bare, was painted and so was their hair, worn long—by the men—twisted in tiny ringlets over their heads and bound in a queue behind. This pigtail was often folded back over their heads, looking like an antique war helmet. The lobes of their ears were hollowed out and stretched until they hung to their shoulders, or encircled a spectacular bone disk big as a small plate. They carried painted bull-hide shields, and the bands of monkey fur bound about their knees gave a barbaric flavor to their general restraint in the use of ornament. Beautiful, hard-boiled young men they were, at once virile and girlish, who walked with a flapper slouch, were as graceful as gigolos and utterly unimpressed by us and our ways. You felt that they had crystallized, eons ago, into their present casual, slant-eyed way to be; that they believed whatever they now believe, acted as they now act, when Europeans

were still walking on all fours and hadn't yet discovered fire.

The ladies were as small and plump as the men were tall and slim. Their hair was not long, but so short that their heads seemed to be shaved. Great brass ornaments encased legs and arms, and around their neck they wore an amazing collar consisting of row upon row of flexible brass and copper wire hoops that bounced up and down as they walked.

Old people too came out of the burrows to observe us; naked children appeared. All were swarming with flies. The flies hung in clusters in the corners of their eyes, wandered in and out of their mouths, covered their henna-painted bodies, and the people seldom took the trouble to brush them away. Many were blind, probably because the flies had eaten away their eyeballs. Frequently we noticed the men and boys standing on one leg, sometimes for hours—a racial habit, it was said. And we heard of another custom, which fortunately we did not personally experience. Our old friend the *Encyclopaedia* confirms the rumor: "The oddest of their customs is the importance attached to spitting. To spit upon a person is regarded as a sign of reverence and good will." It adds that children are always spat on at birth and that an early traveler, being regarded as a supernatural being, was beseeched to spit on these singular persons from morning until night.

Our impression of the Masai was necessarily very casual, and of them I have no certainty but one. There is one thing at least you are sure of, one thing the mind utterly refuses to accept, and that is the possibility of a Masai ever achieving the faintest conception of the tenderness and pity, the selfless abstractions of the Christian faith. And yet missionaries attend them. Great are the delusions of hope!

Chapter 31

THE LIONS WON'T LOOK PLEASANT

Situated high up on the Tanganyika plateau below the snow-covered heights of Mt. Meru in the little town of Arusha, is a blue plaster hotel with a blessedly plentiful supply of water and a whole row of bathrooms. And many dusty hunters, I fancy, must come in from many waterless camps in the wilderness to revel in a sufficiency of the thing you notice least when you have plenty of it, and most when you have none. And sitting in the bar of this most engaging hotel were two persons who added not a little to the already considerable picturesqueness of the scene.

They might have been sitting in the bar of any hotel in any ranch town of the American far West. It was partly, of course, their wide, high-peaked sombreros, partly their steady, far-looking glance, which suggested much searching of a vast and mostly empty landscape for the very little there was to be seen—and always finding it; partly their tall, rangy figures and the nondescript clothes they wore, the clothes of men who would rather die than look like sportsmen who dress the part. But true sportsmen nevertheless, and among the most famous in East Africa—the Trichard brothers of Arusha.

On the cheek of one of them was a scar still only half healed, given him by a she-leopard some weeks before. He had been hunting with a party of California boys and had indiscreetly

tossed a stone into a bush where the leopardess had taken refuge, meaning to drive her out for his clients to shoot. The beast charged him, bore him to earth, and clawed him badly before his brother could risk a shot. The length of the leopard's spring, afterward measured, was eighteen feet!

The other Trichard was the hero of a recent lion adventure of which we had been hearing ever since we reached Tanganyika. Accompanied by his wife and baby, he had been driving a long ox train across the prairie one very dark night. A sudden commotion broke out up in front, and Trichard, walking forward to investigate, found an immense band of lions which had charged, killed, and were proceeding to eat the leading span of oxen. Just at that moment an automobile came down the road behind the cart. Trichard transferred his wife and baby to the front seat, and standing on the running-board, persuaded the most unwilling driver to approach the pack of lions. In the glare of the headlights Trichard shot no less than nine of them, the corpses of which Schwarz, a person by no means given to exaggeration, saw lying by the roadside the next day.

One of the Trichards—the leopard, not the lion, brother—went with us when we continued northward from Arusha. The landscape continued so persistently zoölogical that we lost interest in the gnus, kongoni, giraffes, zebras, gazelles, and didn't even look. The only sight that revived our sated eyes was the wart hogs which trotted about with tails sticking straight up in what seemed a kind of delirium of self-satisfaction.

We made camp that night in a sparse, sunny woods at the foot of a small mountain. The sunset shadows of this grove were literally haunted by the most elfin of all creatures, the dick-dicks—Pygmies of the animal world. From under every tree one of these slim-legged, fragile antelope, no bigger than

a rabbit, stared at us with great eyes out of all proportion to its tiny body. Sometimes they were alone, sometimes in little bands, and they flew away as noiseless as shadows, without disturbing a leaf or cracking a twig. They were not too elfin, however, to supply us with very excellent roasts all the time we were in camp.

Next morning Trichard cast his knowing eye over the scene and said it might be a likely place to find a rhino. Hoping to see one and even stirred by certain murderous intent, I started off into the woods, accompanied by Schwarz and Trichard. It was an enchanted place. Dick-dicks were everywhere, impalla flickered in and out of the shadows, a stately herd of eland galloped for a long time just ahead of us. Monkeys with their faces cozily framed in thick fur peered intently down at us from the branches of neat umbrella trees. There were open places of blowing grass and the singing and sighing of cool breezes in little thorny trees. The tall heads of giraffe occasionally appeared high above everything else, and the best-dressed birds in the world stalked about. They were as big as turkeys and wore the most perfectly fitted fawn-colored coats, black and white blouses, and rose-red stockings, put together with a chic only to be achieved by the rue de la Paix of the bird world.

In this place of glancing sunlight and delicate, strange forms we had almost forgotten the rhino. Suddenly a wary whistle, badly and melodramatically imitating a bird, floated toward Trichard and me from Schwarz, who was walking nearer the base of the mountain. As quickly and as noiselessly as we could move, we made our way toward him. The tops of the low, sparse trees interlaced above our heads, and beneath their neatly spreading tops were no obstructing branches and no underbrush. We stood for a moment in breathless silence and

then noiselessly a monstrous form materialized in the gold-green dusk, a kind of Zeppelin, no, an old-fashioned locomotive with a big funnel sticking up in front, or a mammoth hog belonging to a prehistoric race of giants. It moved without a sound, as softly and swiftly as the lightest gazelle, not ten yards away from us. The whole scene was like something from another geologic era. I stared with all my eyes, but before I had taken in every detail the rhino was gone. It had no more occurred to me to try to shoot it than it would have occurred to me suddenly to begin to pump lead into something in an expensive zoo. I'm sorry. I know this otherwise delightful chronicle sadly needs one good killing spiced with danger and heavy with suspense, and this was a first-rate chance, because rhinos usually charge the minute they become aware of you. But I did not shoot; I never even thought of it. Every one in camp was furious with me; Trichard was furious. "Why didn't you shoot?" he whispered as the rhino slid away into the shadows. "Why didn't you?" I retorted, only to be told reproachfully that a professional hunter never takes the first shot. Trichard and Schwarz had little doubt, however, that they could still get him. But although there was much pussy-footing about the grove, much hissing to the barefoot tracker who was only concerned with the thorns that kept stabbing his feet, much stationing of me behind trees while the rhino was beaten out of covers where he wasn't, we never again laid eyes on him.

A long distance from camp, away off on the sloping shoulder of the mountain, Trichard built us a *boma*. It was dark when we set forth. The great troubled eyes of the little dick-dicks stared at us in the twilight and the shadows of their woods were now peopled by stealthy, darting hyenas, and jackals that

stood, their silky tails level with their backs, staring with all the alert and watchful intentness of the coward. Night darkened over the plain and in the tall groves of acacias through which we passed before we reached the *boma*. It was built on the edge of these woods, but the space in front was clear and we could see far across the high valley to a ridge of broken hills in the north.

We spread rugs on the ground inside the hedge of thorns and sat down to wait. The moon would not rise until almost morning, but the stars, crackling like frost in the deep sky, cast a pale glint on the gay stripes of the dead and already horribly swollen zebra. Among those brilliant constellations so deeply set in the blue abyss above were not one but three Southern Crosses and the familiar Big Dipper in the wrong place and upside down.

Hyenas had already gathered in vast numbers. They were all about us; our flashlights made the whole woods come alive with green jewels. Then we put out the lights, and little by little the hyenas began to moan, then to utter queer whoops, something between a bark and the moo of a cow, and then, reassured, they filled the night with a demoniac chorus. They whinnied and whimpered, they grunted like pigs, they barked, they seemed to mutter and talk together, they giggled and then wildly laughed, a laugh that ended in a moan or turned to an indescribably savage growl. It was all the mad sounds out of all the madhouses in the world.

Then the noise changed. At last they had got up their courage to creep up on the kill. Now you heard the rip of hide like tearing canvas, then the sloshing of jaws in the wet entrails, the crunch of bones. There were lustful whines, hoggish grunts, outbursts of snarling screams as they fought over a titbit, then the slithering, gobbling sounds again and faint tit-

ters that faded off into a whisper of mad despair. What could it mean—the mirthlessness of that laugh, the insane sadness of that gruesome sigh?

When we flashed out lights on them we caught the green gleam of a score of pairs of eyes, had a glimpse of dripping, open jaws before, with a cowardly whimper, the black forms flitted away to form a watchful, gleaming circle at a safe distance from the kill. Then, after a maniac interval of moaning and tittering, they came back to the prey.

Suddenly we were aware that all was not as before. The hyenas were mute, there was not even the sound of sloshing jaws. "A leopard," Trichard whispered, and his flashlight evoked a glittering vision. With lowered head turned slightly to look, a huge leopard, gaudy as a jewel, stared into the lamp. It moved off a few paces, still staring, and then returned calmly to feed. Alice pointed her gun, and just as she was about to shoot, Charlie's head rose in front of her barrel end. She tactfully omitted pulling the trigger, whereupon Blair and Trichard, by some misunderstanding, both shot. One bullet hit the leopard's head, the other the tail, but for domestic reasons I shall refrain from saying which was which. We pulled the blazing spotted body back into the *boma* and the hyena carnival went on till it was again interrupted by the silky menace of another leopard.

Above us the constellations wheeled in their rather awful serenity across the sky. The Big Dipper marched westward, one Southern Cross slipped behind the eastern horizon. Star groups met, crossed, parted. Unhurried they traveled their stately and inevitable ways. The fetid smell of the carrion became stronger and a gust of wind preceding the late moonrise brought the prolonged and far-off roaring of lions. A whole pack of them must have marked down a herd and crept—with

what skill and stealth!—up on those fleet-footed, keen-eared grazers, then leapt among them, strong, swift, and terrible. Almost I recalled that conclusion reached on Tanganyika Lake —sole philosophic product, as it were, of our long-anticipated sojourn among primitive people. (I like Lévy-Bruhl's word, "pre-logical," better than "primitive.") But no, it had gone for good.

A pearl-like twilight put out the wheeling stars, and sunrise overtook us on our way back to camp through bush literally alive with game birds—the good dawn, the reassuring sun. Paradise again, for a day.

The dusty road, little more than a half-effaced wagon track, wandered across a particularly wild veldt that swelled away and away upward to the foothills, and its immensity made the little open Chevrolet seem no bigger than a slowly crawling insect. One of the trucks had gone on to Nairobi several days before, and the other was far behind. Our sojourn in the game-fields was almost over. We had long ago tired of the little shooting we had done and had given up hope of any real encounter with lions. The ammunition had been packed that morning on the truck, and although we happened to have rifles in the car with us, they were unloaded.

So we bowled along, paying no attention to the everlasting herds of Noah's ark animals grazing all about us, when, with the usual ineptness of chance, Schwarz's eye fell upon two lions taking the morning air several hundred yards from the trail. We were anxious to photograph them, and leaving the road, crept slowly lionward. At first they proudly ignored our advance. The lioness was stretched drowsily, not prone but with big, silky paws laid out neatly side by side in front, hind legs stretched at length behind. The lion was in a noble couchant

position, his lordly head held high. Calmly, majestically, he stared across the plain where so many potential dinners grazed at a respectful distance, protected by the daylight and the keen-eyed vigilance of the scouts which, it is said, the grass-eaters station on the outskirts of their herds.

It was a perfect African scene—the pastel sky, the wash of pale sunlight, the tawny veldt backed by desolate hills, the grazing ruminants, and, in the foreground, lions—the most truly kinglike of all breathing things. Now their heavy heads were turned to stare, and as we drew nearer they began to look bigger than any lions, I am sure, ever could possibly have been. A hoarse, muttering sound breathed from the male, and as we still came on, one curiously light and yet unhurried motion brought him to his feet. The lioness, too, swiftly and gracefully rose. They still stared loweringly, and then, with an air of haughty boredom, began slowly to walk, without a slinking gesture in their stately march. We followed. The lions did not go straight away from us but made a wide circle, often stopping to give us a long, puzzled, irritated, and utterly fearless look before they continued their dignified progress. They were immensely long from head to tail and moved with a sinewy, rippling motion that gave a fearful impression of latent swiftness and power. Sometimes they lay down, hoping perhaps that we would have the good manners to take the hint and no longer disturb their noon siesta. Charlie, perpetually in and out of the car, turning the crank of the camera, implored us to get as close to them as possible.

Beautiful and dignified as lions are above all other animals, they undoubtedly have not good tempers. They disliked intensely this persistence, this dogging their footsteps, our constant attempts to close in on them; and horrid, scolding sounds boomed from their deep throats. Sometimes their pace quick-

ened for a short distance to a run, then again they stopped and turned, with increasing surliness, to look, their great round heads lowered, the tips of their tails twitching. One felt their anger rising, felt too the quality of that anger—that it must be swift and savage beyond conception. The very air crackled with danger, and I do not remember ever before experiencing so definitely the feeling of fear. As their irritation increased, their pace became slower; they no longer ran, and the muttering sounds became a hollow and ferocious growl. The lioness began lashing her flanks.

"Just a little nearer," moaned Charlie. "Don't overdo it," nervously counseled Grace. "For God's sake don't stop," shouted Trichard, clutching his empty gun; "they're going to charge."

The lioness had suddenly whirled and assumed a spectacular crouching posture. Nothing was ever sweeter than the *grrr* of the engine picking up speed or more delightful than the cracks on the head from the iron bar along the canvas top of the Chevrolet as we bounded across the plain with our backs turned to the outraged lions.

On the road we perceived a truck and a gentlemanly-looking person watching the scene through field glasses. What was our amazement to discover that this person was Blair dressed up as no human being ever had a right to be and wearing a Nairobi sombrero—Blair, who had gone on to make sure of our steamer reservations and ought by rights to have been on his way to Mombasa! He calmly put up his field glasses, manifested no interest whatever in our recent encounter with the king of beasts. Instead he pulled a pair of pigskin gloves out of his pocket with an affected modesty and remarked that we looked extremely dirty. He also asked us how we liked his hat, told us that Nairobi was a delightful city very much re-

sembling Fargo, North Dakota, but with a something added—a blend, we gathered, of Paris and London. Fearing we might be out of water, he had got some mineral water at a club to which he did not belong. When they saw how well he looked, however, his gloves, overcoat, and all, they made no difficulty, he stated, about giving it to him.

"But the steamer reservations?" we demanded in chorus.

"Steamer reservations? Well, I can't really say, but I believe the situation remains unchanged."

I don't know whether it was the overcoat or the pigskin gloves, but we suddenly realized, with a sinking of the heart, that for us Africa was over. And it was. The dusty road bore us on across the Tanganyika border into Kenya and to the Parisian Fargo of East Africa, Nairobi, where the skies were full of airplanes, the streets full of American-made automobiles, and it was all just about as bad as being at home.

Chapter 32

AFTER ALL

Came the dawn, or rather ten-thirty A.M. daylight saving time, one summer morning in New York City. We sat in a dark room high up above the cement and steel, the clamor of New York's—not New York's but to-day's—appalling noise and haste. Beside us sat an Authority of the moving-picture world, and before us passed once more the figures of old friends. Ekibondo was there and Niapu and the slim bodies of royal wives in swaying halos, lifting their fine limbs in time to the glorified jazz no ear but ours could hear. An aged Pygmy chief danced in the gold sunlight and shadows of Tongolo's village; long canoes shot like arrows through the white water of the Aruwimi; the bland faces of giraffes towered above little trees behind which they fancied they were hidden. Then a blaze of daylight drove away these shadows from another world, and we were grouped about a mahogany desk awaiting the pronouncement of Authority.

"Yes, that's all very interesting, but what about suspense? Now you remember how in *Nainook of the North*— No? Well, in *Nainook of the North* he's there on the ice and he can't get up to the water hole. He struggles, it seems, for hours, and he can't make it. The suspense is magnificent—it's really terrific. Have you got anything like that?"

We were forced to admit we had no ice.

"Well, I suppose not. But take your giraffes. Now in a pic-

ture we just handled there was a great scene with a giraffe. He went wild and began kicking everything off his back. You saw it all, boxes, bottles, cans of condensed milk flying every which way. That was great stuff."

"It was a camel," murmured his secretary without looking up.

The Authority was undisturbed. "Yes, yes, a camel. Now if you've got anything like that—comic, you know? And where's the menace?"

We remembered our plans for filming an African melodrama, plans which had been abandoned from sheer boredom at some period of the Ituri safari—remembered the faked cannibal pots and the rubber spear with sudden intense regret.

"Where," he repeated, "is the menace?"

"Pardon *me,*" remarked a gentleman present, made known to us as the Biggest Cutter in the business; "I believe I can take care of all that. All we gotta do is to graph the interest, redistribute the peaks, and potentialize the threat. We'll feature the two ladies as having made the trip alone, run a title about the danger of exploration in the forest, show the tame elephants for wild, say that Teddy Roosevelt discovered the okapi, and play up that place where the Pygmies are shooting the party with poisoned arrows."

And so it was arranged. Eventually, perhaps, we shall believe that it is all true. Already the outlines between truth and fiction are becoming a little blurred. Already the lady explorers seem in a perilous way, and when I see our Pygmies threatening us with their tiny arrows I am beginning to forget the difficulties we had in showing them how to do it. And none of these minor inaccuracies will matter in view of all one does not know about Africa after a mere seven months spent among the shadows that still linger in the heart of darkness.

Appendix

Having learned that Mr. P. T. L. Putnam of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology had recently returned from an anthropological expedition to the Uele district of the Belgian Congo, I hastened to inquire whether his researches included the Mangbetus and whether he had any new light to throw upon their history and culture. Mr. Putnam replied that although he had spent a short time among them, his investigations on this occasion did not cover the Mangbetus. He is now, however, preparing to return to the Congo under the auspices of the Peabody Museum for the purpose of studying this people. Mr. Putnam stated that since the very early works of Schweinfurth, Junker, and Casati, very little original material on the Mangbetus has appeared —with the exception of an excellent treatise on their language which has just been written by Father Vekens of the Dominican Mission at Rungu.

In 1909 the American Museum of Natural History sent out its Congo expedition consisting of the eminent zoölogists Mr. Herbert Lang and Dr. James H. Chapin. They remained five years in Central Africa. During this period they visited the court of the great Mangbetu king Okondo, but as their purpose was chiefly to collect zoölogical and ethnological specimens, they carried on no extensive anthropological research among the Mangbetus. They did, however, take a great number of Mangbetu photographs, forming a really superb collection, which may be seen at the Museum, and also brought back carved ivories, tools, utensils, and other ethnological specimens.

Such statements about the Mangbetus as I have made, other than those derived from personal observation, are based upon the works of Schweinfurth and Casati. I was unable to find these works in translation, and took the information from the monograph of van Overbergh and de Jonghe on the Mangbetus (in French) in the reference department of the New York Public Library. In this van Overbergh quotes freely from Schweinfurth, Junker, Casati, and others. I have used the early spelling of the word Mangbetu, rather than that used by the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The—relatively—little that is known of this people is summed up in

the van Overbergh monograph, from which I have roughly translated:

"Before the arrival of the Arab slave traders the Mangbetu formed a powerful society; it was composed, it is said, of two categories; the conquered—more or less aboriginal—Bangba, Medje, Makere . . . and others; and the conquerors, who formed a kind of aristocracy. The latter imposed their ways; after some time a fusion took place and today the ancient conquered peoples are proud to call themselves Mangbetu. . . . The Mangbetu is not only well built, strong, muscular, but he is agile, supple, elegant. His type is the most beautiful of the Uele country. He is intelligent, courageous, capable of friendship and devotion . . . shrewd, a good bargainer, but not interested in abstract ideas. His word, once given, is scrupulously kept. He is hospitable, gives generously and without ostentation to the poor.

"The Mangbetu love beauty. They are artists. Especially are they the architects of Central Africa. Schweinfurth writes with amazement of the imposing halls of their great chiefs 150 feet long, 60 wide, 50 high, perfectly proportioned, combining sturdiness and grace. All the houses are well proportioned, well built, decorated on the outside with beautiful designs. The Mangbetus are the finest of the iron workers; fine wood-carvers, ivory-carvers, musicians. And they have attained a well-developed social art. . . .

"They have an idea of morality founded on good and bad. Family morality has fixed rules; the old are well treated, theft is punished. . . . The situation of the slaves is not bad; the position of women higher than with other Central African peoples. Early travelers have been struck with the consideration with which chiefs surround certain women whom they even consult in political matters. . . .

"They have a system of jurisprudence and a penal code. Families form groups which recognize a village chief, and he in turn submits to the 'great chief' whose power is absolute, inexorable, and often cruel, but confined within the rules of rigid custom.

"They were great warriors and terrible in victory. The men were cannibals, and it was a point of honor to eat the enemy.

"Their religious beliefs should be made the subject of careful study. They believe in a Supreme Being, creator, but too high, too remote, to be invoked. No temples, no idols. No ancestor worship, but formerly human sacrifices on the tomb of a chief. All are more or less divinatory, but the sorcerers are the great consulters of oracles. A powerful secret society exists which controls its members under pain of horrible supernatural punishments."

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